

Sport, The Business of _____: Exploring Higher Purpose in a Professional Sport
Organization

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EXPLORING HIGHER PURPOSE IN PRO SPORT

ABSTRACT

Researchers have demonstrated that organizational leaders' communication of an organizational higher purpose (i.e., a definition of 'why the organization exists') profoundly benefits organizational performance (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014); however, sport organizational scholars and leaders remain ambiguous in their definitions of *why* such organizations exist (Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007). Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the presence and management of higher purpose in a professional sport organization. To fulfill this research purpose, a qualitative, single-site case study was used to study a professional sport organization, with data collection methods including employee interviews, observation of organizational artifacts and an analysis of organizational documents. These data were analyzed by creating typologies based upon two theoretical frameworks: (1) Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) four types of higher purpose; and (2) Bell-Laroche, Maclean, Thibault and Wolfe's (2014) 4-I Values Framework, to understand how leaders were managing higher purpose with Management by Values (MBV) practices. From this analysis, the organization's higher purpose was found to be largely ambiguous; however, most stakeholders espoused The Good (i.e., service to others) as the predominant source of higher purpose. Secondly, leaders were found to informally and intuitively manage higher purpose through a 'top-down' communication of organizational core values. These findings suggest that leaders have an opportunity to both discover and communicate their organization's higher purpose and to develop formal MBV practices that could allow higher purpose to be utilized as a beneficial strategic management resource.

Key Words: purpose, management, culture, values, conscious

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. – Nelson Mandela

I am a true believer in the ‘power of sport.’ As Mandela suggests, I believe that sport is valuable for individuals and communities, and on a global scale, I believe that sport can elevate the human condition. Throughout my life, sport has made me cheer, cry, laugh and love. Being a spectator of professional sport has, and continues to be, a valuable part of my life. Professional sport has entertained me, connected me with others, excited my emotions and allowed me to escape my daily routine. I believe being a spectator of sport has helped me live a happier and healthier life.

Researchers investigating sport’s value to individual fans and communities have added depth to Mandela’s depiction of sport and have supported my own perception that sport is a source of social good. Specifically, for individuals, watching sport can create excitement and joy (Eastman & Riggs, 1994; Gantz & Wenner, 1995; Smith, Patterson, Williams, & Hogg, 1981), while serving as an escape from everyday routine (Snyder & Spreitzer 1978; Wann, Allen, & Rochelle, 2004). Many sport spectators deeply appreciate witnessing the ‘beauty’ of sport (Brown, 1996), whereas other sports fans use their favourite team to express and enhance their self-image (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976). Additionally, several sport scholars have recognized that sport spectatorship can strengthen an individual’s social network, which in turn may positively influence one’s social psychological well being (Eastman & Land, 1997; Melnick, 1993; Smith, 1988; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001).

For the benefit of communities, Jarvie (2006) explains “sport and other associational activity can make a contribution to building up levels of trust in sport, culture and society and consequently contributing to democracy, community spirit and a weakening public domain” (p. 335). For example, Hague and Mercer (1998) found that a local Scottish soccer team helped foster a sense of local identity and a strong attachment to the community. As well, Harris (1998) suggests that sport can encourage bridging, whereby new friendships and social connectivity are created across class, religious and ethnic boundaries.

Despite this ‘power of sport’ and the beneficial value that sport can theoretically create for individuals and communities, dialogue exists among sport management scholars about whether sport practitioners and researchers are serving individuals and communities in the way they could. Zeigler (2007) questions, in relation to spectator sport, “why we are doing it?” (p. 298), while stating “what evidence do we have that sport as a social institution is really making a positive contribution to society?” (p. 297). Newman (2014) asserts that sport is currently assumed to exist “principally as a commercial activity” (p. 604), which thus influences sport industry workers and researchers to direct efforts towards maximizing profits, instead of other benefits that sport can provide to individuals and communities.

Hiebert (2014) theorizes that there could be in harm in scholars and practitioners allowing sport’s commercial elements to become the predominant dialogue within sport management research and practice, claiming: “sports shaped by the needs of a capitalist system serve vested interests and become a type of ‘cultural anesthesia,’ a form of ‘spiritual masturbation’” (p. 59). Frisby (2005) responds to this caution by advocating for

an increased scholarly focus on the social and cultural value of sport, stating, “whereas I am not rejecting growth or profit as possible outcomes of practice and research, I see the broadening or balancing of the agenda as a much needed and healthy development in our field” (p. 6).

In this way, sport management scholars join a dialogue developed within the mainstream study of organizations and organizational management, whereby such scholars advocate for all organizational leaders to ‘broaden their agenda’ beyond profit and recognize how their organizations can beneficially contribute to individuals and communities. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) claim that a profit-focused management paradigm has become pervasive in all industries—not just sport—and has compromised leaders’ capacity to create value for individuals and communities, such as valuable products or services to their customers, meaningful work for their employees, and beneficial contributions to their community. If organizational leaders’ primary pursuit is profit, then leaders are susceptible to make decisions that create beneficial value for one stakeholder group (i.e., financial wealth to owners or investors), but compromise the value created for another (e.g., spiritual wealth to an employee, cultural wealth to a community). Mackey and Sisodia (2013) imply that profit-focused management creates a moral and ethical imbalance in business practices, positioning organizations to be perceived by stakeholders as a source of private accumulation, rather than a source of value creation.

As an alternative, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) introduce a ‘conscious approach’ to organizational leadership, which serves as a model for how leaders can utilize a broadened agenda to create beneficial value for individuals and communities, while

simultaneously fostering greater organizational ‘success,’ including increased profits. In a ‘conscious approach’, leaders of an organization aspire “to create financial, intellectual, social, cultural, emotional, spiritual, physical, and ecological wealth for all its major stakeholders, including team members [i.e., employees], customers, investors, suppliers, and communities” (p. 270) (See Figure 1.1). Through their management philosophy, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) view “each stakeholder [as] both a means and an end, an instrument of value creation as well as its beneficiary” (p. 270).

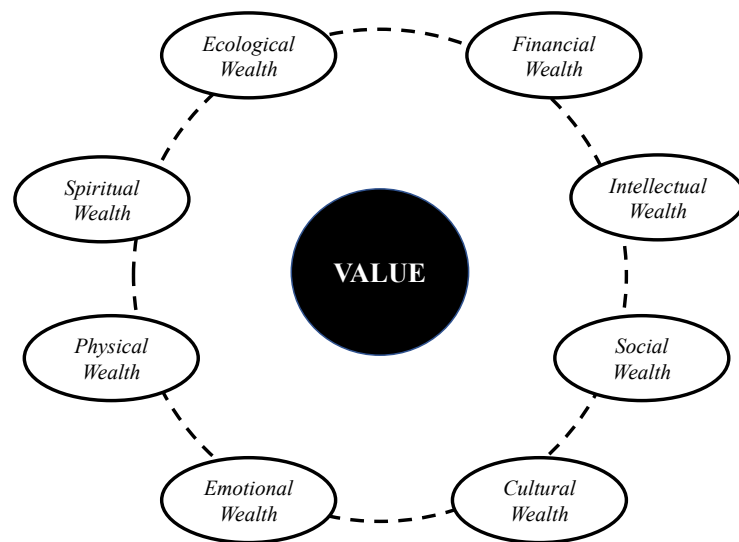


Figure 1.1 – Sources of value, as conceptualized by Mackey & Sisodia (2013, p. 270)

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) recommend that scholars and practitioners evolve their approach to organizational management to develop a conscious management approach that provides the greatest opportunity for organizations to succeed and beneficially create value for their stakeholders. They suggest that organizational leaders should shift their focus towards contributing value to others, which will in turn, provide

all stakeholders (including organizational leaders and investors) the opportunity to receive more value in return.

Viewing this model in another way, Bloom (2010) uses the metaphor of an ecosystem to explain this philosophy of reciprocal value creation: when all members of an ecosystem contribute value to others, each member receives value in return, and the entire system thrives. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) claim that organizations are no different, as when organizational leaders intentionally create value for others (e.g., spiritual wealth, cultural wealth), they receive value in return from the community (e.g., financial wealth). Various scholars have supported this claim with research; specifically, Collins and Porras (1994) and Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe (2014) have empirically observed that organizational leaders who dedicate their organizations to creating value for their stakeholders have financially outperformed the average market firm to a significant degree.

The essential element in Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) depiction of conscious organizational management is the leaders' self-reflective capacity, whereby he or she utilizes an understanding of *why the organization exists* and *what value the organization provides* to society as a strategic resource in their management. The answer to these questions is defined as the organization's 'higher purpose.' Mackey and Sisodia (2013) state that while an organization's vision may represent an image of the world to strive towards and its mission may refer to a core strategy, a higher purpose refers to "the difference you're trying to make in the world" (p. 47). Bloom (2010) further suggests that understanding an organization's higher purpose comes from imagining what the world would be like if the organization did not exist. In relation to a higher purpose, profit is

considered merely a ‘means’ to sustain an organization in its pursuit of its higher purpose; not the ultimate ‘ends’ that organizational stakeholders are working towards.

Consequently, scholars have observed that organizational leaders who reflect upon their higher purpose and strategically utilize their higher purpose in their management grow their capacity to create value for stakeholders (Collins & Porras, 1994; Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014). In that way, understanding an organization’s higher purpose and the strategies needed to incorporate higher purpose into managerial operations furthers leaders’ opportunity to inspire happier employees, more satisfied customers, and ultimately, greater profits for investors.

Therefore, Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) call for organizational leaders to ask, “*why does our business exist?*” (p. 34) adds support and context for Zeigler’s (2007) similar question posed to sport management scholars, stating “*what are we really promoting, and do we know why we are doing it?*” (p. 298). Since organizational leaders’ reflection upon their organization’s higher purpose is thought to be a practice that enables creation of greater value for stakeholders, such leaders defining a higher purpose for professional sport organizations may serve as a route to maximize the beneficial contributions that sport can provide to individuals and communities.

Research Purpose

This research was created to confront the paradox existing within sport management scholarship; that is, the acknowledged ambiguity towards the higher purpose of sport organizations (Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007), contrasted with the organizational benefits that emerge from a leader’s definition and strategic utilization of an organizational higher purpose (Collins & Porras, 1994; Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe,

2014). Simply put, while empirical research exists that supports the benefits of higher purpose, sport organizational scholars and leaders remain ambiguous as to *why* such organizations exist. Thus, the purpose of this research was to explore the presence and management of higher purpose in a professional sport organization. More specifically, I empirically studied a single, specific professional sport organization, to understand and describe how organizational stakeholders define its higher purpose and how organizational leaders strategically manage their organization's higher purpose. From the results, such knowledge may help deepen an understanding of what purpose this professional sport organization may be serving in society and how a conscious approach to management may have better enabled the leaders of this sport organization to maximize the value they give and are consequentially receiving.

Utilizing a pragmatic methodology, I conducted interviews with organizational employees, observed physical artifacts in organizational workspaces, and analyzed organizational documents to gain insight, useful in describing the organization's higher purpose and the leaders' strategic utilization of higher purpose. The result of this case study is an in-depth description of how members of a professional sport organization define their organization's higher purpose and how leaders strategically manage their organization's higher purpose for the benefit of its stakeholders. Through this case study, I addressed the following questions, including:

- 1) What higher purpose do stakeholders of a professional sport organization espouse?
- 2) What practices do organizational leaders use to manage and strategically utilize their organization's higher purpose?

In the following chapters, I will explain the theoretical foundations of this research (Chapter II), describe the methods utilized to address the research questions (Chapter III), present the findings of the research (Chapter IV), discuss the insight generated from such findings (Chapter V) and finally, conclude by considering the contributions of this research (Chapter VI). Overall, this thesis is intended to be a detailed, insightful and trustworthy description of how higher purpose exists and is managed within a professional sport organization, which may be valuable to sport management scholars and practitioners alike and may contribute to the creation of an exciting and meaningful future for sport leaders and sport organizations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To describe the higher purpose of a professional sport organization and to further understand how organizational leaders can manage their organization's higher purpose, I first explored the research literature discussing how higher purpose can exist within an organization and what managerial approaches leaders can take to help an organization strategically utilize its higher purpose. Sport management scholars (Frisby, 2005; Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007) have expressed critical perspectives, calling for sport organizational leaders to move beyond a profit-maximization focus and instead, aim to provide maximum value to their stakeholders.

To respond to these critical perspectives, Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) Conscious Capitalism management framework can be useful in guiding an organizational leaders' further understanding and utilization of an organizational higher purpose to create further value for all stakeholders. By reviewing these management literature concepts, I demonstrate how the purpose of the current study may respond to the needs of both the sport management literature and the sport industry practitioner, as well as contribute to an evolving dialogue of organizational management in the 21st century.

Problematizing Sport Management

Through a review of the sport management literature, I find that I am not alone in asking about, or responding to, questions about sport's 'raison d'etre' (Frisby, 2005; Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007). Sport scholars have recently critically analyzed the sport management discipline when seeking responses to growing challenges associated with the commercialization and commodification of sport. Such critical analysis has provided

scholars an opportunity to reassess the value that sport organizations provide to their stakeholders and how sport organizational leaders can actively work to ensure such value is delivered to stakeholders of sport organizations.

Zeigler (2007) asked: “*what evidence do we have that sport as a social institution is really making a positive contribution to society?*” (p. 297), a statement that draws attention to a substantial and meaningful gap in the sport management literature. Zeigler (2007) suggests that sport management scholars need to develop a tenable theory, so that sport organizational leaders may defend and validate their organization’s existence through a self-awareness of *why* the sport organizations should exist as it does today. The need for tenable theory arises in response to the growing prominence of commercial sector sport, which has emerged as a powerful source of global revenue generating activity. In 2014 alone, the U.S. sport industry totaled over \$450 billion in revenue, with the estimated value of the global sport industry to be US\$1.5 trillion (Plunkett Research Group, 2014). While the sport management discipline was once viewed as inclusive of physical activity and public sport programs, the recent dialogue of sport management has shifted to primarily focus on revenue generating professional and major collegiate sport realms (Bowers, Green, & Seifried, 2014).

Many scholars believe that the sport industry’s shift toward greater corporatization is due to an embedding within a commensurate and greater global shift; that is, the sport industry’s commercial development is a tangible representation of the overall rise of free marketization and ‘neoliberalism’ (Newman, 2014; Coakley 2011; Hall, 2006; Horne, 2006; Silk & Andrews, 2012). Interpreted from Adam Smith’s (1776) classic writing, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Newman

(2014) notes that neoliberalism is an economic movement of the late 20th century in which societal leaders advocated for free markets (without government intervention) as means to liberate the freedom of both individuals and society. Others (Coakely, 2011; Hill, 2000) note that the neoliberalist market model has extended into political and cultural spheres of society, with governments passing former public programs to the private sector, allowing competition and self-interest to emerge as the means to achieve progress and solutions to social problems.

The effects of free-marketization are vividly visible through the transformation of the sport industry. Newman (2014) claims that prior to the neoliberalist market revolutions, many considered sport as a means to serve the public good through physical activity and civic engagement. In today's context, Newman (2014) argues that a neoliberalist philosophy has led governments to decrease funding and allow sport programs to be facilitated by private sector organizations, creating a new sporting context, such that sport now mainly exists as a commercial activity.

Futhermore, a global neoliberalist transformation has changed the way both scholars and practitioners view and manage sport. With Wren (2005) describing management as a process of aligning economic, technological, political and social elements of an organization, Zeigler (2007) foresees necessary growth in how sport leaders approach the social elements of the sport industry. Newman (2014) echoes this sentiment, stating that scholars need to study sport "as both a commercial *and* cultural formation" (p. 604). Coakley (2011) describes how, by sport organizational leaders disengaging from sport's social benefits, leaders themselves have aided in further accelerating sport's commercialization, which has redefined how people around the

world think about sport (i.e., ‘as a business’ that is ‘all about money’). Newman (2014) subsequently claims that sport management students, scholars and practitioners have adopted a primary assumption that sport exists “principally as a commercial activity” (p. 604), with practitioner and research efforts directed towards maximizing an organization’s revenue generation and financial wealth.

While it is not my belief that sport’s commercialization is inherently bad, it is my belief that the growing commercial scale of the sport industry does present an increased need among sport management scholars and practitioners to exert greater social accountability to sport organizational stakeholders. That is, I believe that sport scholars and organizational leaders must continually demonstrate that sport is of benefit to society and provides value to people. Zeigler (2007) explains:

I am forced to ask: What are we really promoting, and do we know why we are doing it? I do not have a comprehensive answer, but I do believe strongly that we need to develop a theory of sport that will permit us to assess whether [professional sport] is fulfilling its presumed function of promoting good in society (p. 298)

Zielger (2007) thus calls for sport researchers and practitioners to duly reflect upon sport’s higher purpose, such that one may reconnect with sport’s contribution to society and to use that reflected value as the fundamental inspiration for how sport is managed and practiced.

The sport industry is not an isolated example of its business leaders needing to liberate their respective organization’s higher purpose, given the neoliberalist ideals of commodification and accumulation have become more prominent throughout global

markets (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). As such, the management philosophy of Conscious Capitalism advocates for leaders to respond by undergoing a paradigmatic shift in how they view and manage their organizations. Aligned with Zeigler's (2007) critical comments about sport management, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) explain that through Conscious Capitalism, a leaders' awareness of their organization's higher purpose may allow free marketization to become a powerful resource for social good.

Conscious Capitalism

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) introduce a new conceptualization of organizational management, which allows organizational leaders to leverage simplicity and self-awareness to respond to the complexities inherent within the 21st century. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) describe Conscious Capitalism as "a way of thinking about business that is more conscious of its higher purpose, its impacts on the world, and the relationships it has with its various constituencies and stakeholders" (p. 32). Simply, through Conscious Capitalism, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) advocate for organizational leaders to become aware of the value they are providing to society, and to allow that value to be central to the organization's entire operations. In being aware of a higher purpose, organizational leaders may consciously focus on providing value to organizational stakeholders; and in turn, the organization will receive value in return. That is, leaders and workers do not incur profits by focusing on 'selling,' but by consciously creating a product or service that provides significant value to an organization's stakeholders (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013).

Thus, Conscious Capitalism is designed for leaders to utilize free-marketization as a prosperous opportunity to generate social good. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) argue that

capitalism, as a free-market system, has stimulated great progress and significantly improved the human condition. For example, entrepreneurship in a free-market economy has enabled world-changing innovations (e.g., innovations in personal transportation, computers, antibiotics) (McCloskey, 2010). Additionally, Mackey (2011) argues that capitalism is an ethical system at its core, because of its cardinal principle of voluntary exchange of value (i.e., products, services, money) for mutual benefit. Unless corrupted by crime or coercion, the exchanges between firms and stakeholders in a free-market system can represent win-win opportunities when value is traded voluntarily (i.e., payment of resources in exchange for valued services). This perspective of capitalism reframes the discussion of free-markets and neoliberalism, positioning privatization and commercialization as a framework for the creation of good and value for society. Mackey (2011) explains, “this voluntary exchange for mutual benefit creates the ethical foundation of business and that is why business is ultimately justified to rightfully exist within a society” (p. 86).

Despite capitalism being conceptualized as an inherently ethical model, the narrative of capitalism and free-markets has shifted from one of progress and prosperity, to one of greed and corruption. As Coakley (2011) and Newman (2014) indicate through their respective critiques of the sport industry, the focus of organizations in free-markets has largely shifted from serving public good to serving self-interest and accumulation. This ‘hijacking of capitalism’ is a result of an ethical dialogue that was lost in the early development of free-marketization (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). Before Adam Smith’s (1776) inspirational writing entitled *The Wealth of Nations* (i.e., writing advocating for free-markets and capitalism), Smith (1759) authored *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in

which he prefaced the creation of capitalism with a discussion of two powerful human motivations: 1) the drive for one's self-interest; and 2) the empathy to care about causes or ideals that transcend oneself. Smith's ethically balanced philosophy that should have inspired an ethical approach to capitalism however, was largely ignored by leaders in early capitalist societies. Instead, capitalism developed in a partial way that ignored the empathy and social contribution that Smith otherwise intended (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). The absence of Smith's intended ethical foundation within our current neoliberalist system has resulted in a contemporary capitalist system built on a 'zero-sum' philosophy in which organizational leaders often settle for win-loss situations whereby the balance between self-interest and ideals beyond oneself is shifted towards the drive for self-interest.

Conscious Capitalism intervenes at this ethical split, where Mackey and Sisodia (2013) provide a paradigm by which organizational leaders can refocus their business towards meaningful value creation for society at large. These authors state:

the myth that profit maximization is the sole purpose of business has done enormous damage to the reputation of capitalism and the legitimacy of business in society. We need to recapture the narrative and restore it to its true essence; that the purpose of business is to improve our lives and to create value for stakeholders" (p. 20)

In responding, they directly align with Zeigler's (2007) demand for sport managers and practitioners to reconnect with sport's essence, and understand what value the sport industry creates for society. Through a conscious approach that emphasizes sport's

contribution and higher purpose, sport management scholars and practitioners could have an opportunity to rationalize sport's existence with a tenable theory.

In this research, I use Conscious Capitalism as theoretical framework for understanding an organization. This framework provides an opportunity to understand how organizational stakeholders embrace a higher purpose, while also acting as a commercial, for-profit business. Conscious Capitalism provides one way to theoretically frame the first research question in this study, as I explore the value that professional sport organizations contribute to their stakeholders.

Conscious Capitalism and Corporate Social Responsibility

It is important to distinguish conscious management practice from practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The scope of CSR is broad and encompassing, which Bradish and Cronin (2009) generally describe as “the responsibility of organizations to be ethical and accountable to the needs of their society as well as to their stakeholders” (p. 692). Scholars focusing on CSR in sport largely do so by examining ‘cause-related marketing’, where sport organizations partner with charities or include charitable programming into their operations (Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, & Clark, 2003; Lachowetz & Gladden, 2003; McGlone & Martin, 2006; Roy & Graeff, 2003).

While CSR practices represent a positive way for sport organizational leaders and workers to contribute to society, Mackey (2006) claims that an organization can achieve a more holistically responsible operation through Conscious Capitalism. Mackey (2011) states that “CSR and its cousins all attempt to ‘graft’ social and environmental responsibility onto what in many cases is just a traditional corporate business model” (p. 87), whereas a conscious approach engrains a positive contribution to society into an

organization's very existence. Further, Mackey (2011) contends that CSR is still oriented for the benefit of owners and investors, using "greenwashing" (p. 88) as a public relations strategy to benefit an organization's image—and ultimately its profits—with charitable work often disconnected from the organization's true purpose.

Contrastingly, Conscious Capitalism integrates an organization's orientation towards citizenship and societal contribution into its core, where creating value for communities and stakeholders is an essential part of its operations (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). In that way, "a good business doesn't need to do anything special to be socially responsible. When it creates value for its major stakeholders, it is acting in a socially responsible way" (p. 37). With this distinction, my exploration of sport's contribution to society does not focus on CSR initiatives, but does focus on the higher purpose of sport organizations and the management practices that leaders and workers use that possibly brings higher purpose into action. As Mackey and Sisodia (2013) suggest about Conscious Capitalism, leaders embracing a higher purpose will inherently inspire the creation of value to the organization's stakeholders.

The Four Tenets of Conscious Capitalism

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) constructed Conscious Capitalism upon four foundational tenets (see Figure 2.1), including: 1) *higher purpose and core values*; 2) *stakeholder integration*; 3) *conscious leadership*; and 4) *conscious culture and management*, where these tenets "represent the essential elements of an integrated business philosophy" (p. 33). To view an organization through the lens of Conscious Capitalism first requires an understanding of each of these four tenets.

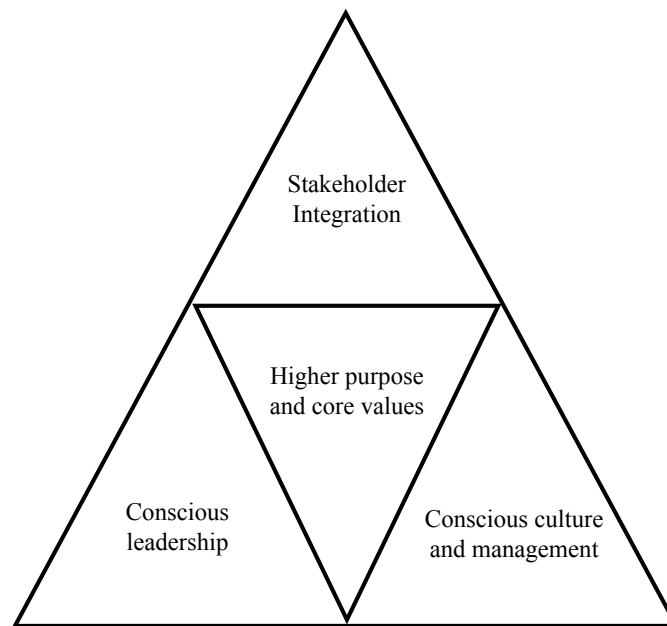


Figure 2.1 – Four Tenets of Conscious Capitalism (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013, p. 33)

Higher Purpose and Core Values

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) simply define purpose as “the reason a company exists” (p. 33). An organization’s higher purpose and its corresponding core values are said to both be central to a conscious organization, providing a foundation from which all other tenets of Conscious Capitalism may develop (i.e., their central position in Figure 2.1). Mackey and Sisodia (2013) further explain “purposeful companies ask questions such as these: Why does our business exist? Why does it need to exist? What core values animate the enterprise and unite all of our stakeholders” (p. 34). The answers to these questions reveal an organization’s higher purpose and core values, which defines what value leaders see their organization providing to its stakeholders. For example, Disney claims their higher purpose is to “create happiness by providing the finest in entertainment for people of all ages, everywhere” (James, 2012), while Google’s higher purpose is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and

useful” (Google, 2016). Leaders’ embrace of a higher purpose such as these is thought to further engage and inspire organizational stakeholders to create meaningful value for those stakeholders.

To further explain the concept of higher purpose, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) identify four categories or types of higher purpose that they observed organizations to espouse. Their framework of higher purposes begins with Plato’s transcendent ideals that animate all human endeavours, including: The Good, The True and The Beautiful (as cited in Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). Plato did not consider these ideals as a ‘means to an end’, as he viewed them as worthy of pursuit in their own right. Relative to an organization, ‘The Good’ represents stakeholders’ collective dedication towards service to others and improvements to stakeholders’ health, education and their quality of life, while ‘The True’ represents collective efforts to further human knowledge through discovery and innovation, and ‘The Beautiful’ inspires stakeholders’ pursuit and creation of perfection, excellence and beauty. In addition to Plato’s ideals, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) identified ‘The Heroic’ as a last type of higher purpose espoused by organizations, which captures stakeholders’ “desire to change the world” (p. 63), solve insoluble problems and make the world a better place.

While Mackey and Sisodia (2013) note that each of these four ideals are distinct, organizational leaders may dedicate time and effort to achieving one or multiple of these ideals through their organization’s higher purpose. By understanding the four ideals and relating them to the value they create for their stakeholders, organizational leaders may further recognize the meaning and worth of their organization’s existence. In this

research, these four types were used as a framework to define the higher purpose of an organization.

Stakeholder Integration

To actualize a higher purpose, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) suggest that an organization must actively create value for all stakeholders that impact or in turn, are impacted by the organization. Kelly, McGowen, MacKenzie, and Snow (2011) explain that “stakeholders are any groups that have a stake—or a personal interest—in the performance or actions of an organization” (p. 48). In a conscious approach to management, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) explain that organizational leaders view the needs of each stakeholder group as the ultimate ‘ends’ for the organization, in contrast to a traditional business paradigm which often views stakeholders as a ‘means’ to maximize profits. In this way, organizational leaders can work to create synergies that provide mutual value and shared benefit for all stakeholders; that is, win-win scenarios that create a positive-sum scenario instead of a zero-sum scenario.

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) posit that organizational leaders who are dedicated to providing the value described in their higher purpose to all their stakeholders will be able to create further benefit for each stakeholder group. The value created by the leaders’ strategic management of higher purpose and core values is theorized to empower an organization to inspire *employee* motivation and happiness, increase *customer* satisfaction, foster positive relationships with the *community* and *environment*, and, ultimately, growing sales and profits for *investors* (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). See Figure 2.2 for a Stakeholder Interdependence model that represents the relationship between an

organization, the organization's higher purpose and core values and the organization's stakeholders.

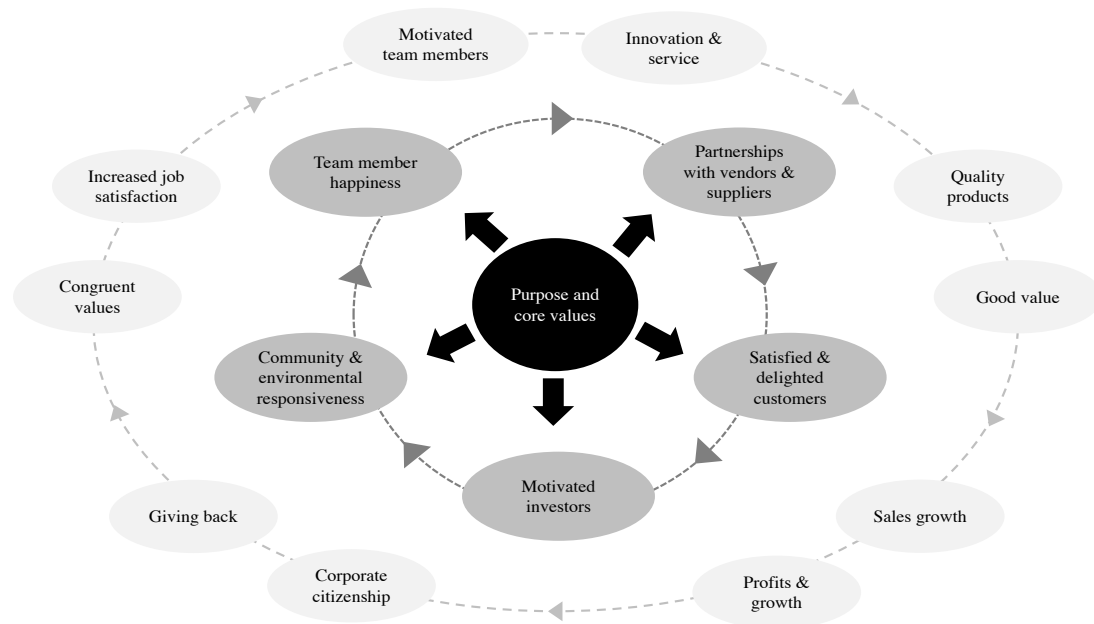


Figure 2.2 – Stakeholder Interdependence Model (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013, p. 73)

Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) emphasis on stakeholder integration joins a current dialogue within management research and practice that appreciates stakeholders as the key to understanding what an organization *is* (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Freeman (1984) introduced Stakeholder Theory within his work entitled *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, in which he advocates for organizations to be conceptualized as an instrument to create value for *all* their stakeholders. Jensen (2001) explains that for two centuries preceding Freeman's (1984) introduction of Stakeholder Theory, an organization's performance was defined by its long-term market value or financial results. In contrast, Freeman (1984) proposes that the 'corporate objective function' (i.e., the purpose of an organization) should be to create value for all stakeholders equally.

Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004) argue the goal of maximizing stakeholder value is ultimately pro-shareholder, claiming:

how else could managers create shareholder value other than by creating products and services that customers are willing to buy, offering jobs that employees are willing to fill, building relationships with suppliers that companies are eager to have, and being good citizens in the community? (p. 366)

The notion that a managerial focus towards integrating and serving stakeholders can create greater value for all stakeholders is further supported through management research. For example, Barrett (2014) notes that organizations who create meaningful engagement for their employees are found to be more productive and more profitable. In terms of customers, Roy and Graeff (2003) add that an organization that markets a ‘cause’ is seen as more favourable by potential consumers. For investors, Collins and Porras (1994) and Sisodia et al. (2014) duly describe organizations that significantly financially outperformed the general marketplace, where the common characteristic among organizations was their strategic utilization of a higher purpose.

Conscious Leadership

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) explain that the collective consciousness of an organization is highly dependent on the consciousness of those individuals who comprise its core leadership team, as “without conscious leadership, little else matters” (p. 178). Conscious leaders are said to inspire stakeholders, embed a shared purpose into organizational systems, guide difficult moral decisions and help employees grow and evolve. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) create an archetype for conscious leaders, illustrating them as authentic individuals who possess emotional, spiritual and systems intelligence.

These qualities allow such leaders to demonstrate integrity and show the capacity for love and care, while also maintaining a high level of business acumen and soundly leading employees.

A review of leadership literature can assist in further understanding particular leadership qualities that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) associate with a conscious leader. First, Greenleaf (1977) defines servant leadership as “the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first” (p. 7). One’s servant leadership manifests as a dedication to developing followers, which is thought to lead to greater general dedication to stakeholders, and overall, greater ethical behaviour (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2013). Building from this service ethos, a leader is said to become ‘transformational’ when they can “encourage a follower to maximize his or her potential in the pursuit of higher-order needs, such as achievement and self-actualization, while also aligning the follower with organizational goal attainment” (Peachey, Zhou, Damon & Burton, 2015, p. 572).

These authors note that through transformational leadership behaviours, a leader will serve employees’ needs, while simultaneously addressing organizational needs. A leader’s servant and transformation leadership behaviours align with the emerging concept of ethical leadership, which is defined generally as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships” (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009, p. 120). Through ethical leadership, a leader’s intentions are focused towards those he or she is leading, ensuring a commitment to encouraging or serving the transformation of his or her associated stakeholders.

To exhibit servant, transformational, and ethical leadership in leadership practice, scholars suggest that a leader must undergo personal transformation. Cook-Greuter (2004) explains that leaders transform through levels of ‘meaning-making,’ where each level represents a more complex worldview and a deeper understanding of how and individual may both influence and be influenced by others. While lower levels of meaning-making result in a self-centric worldview, individuals can experience development to gain a more socio-centric or global-centric worldview, thereby reflecting Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) depiction of conscious leaders, who possess “a greater awareness of [their] inner self, [their] external reality, and the impacts [they] have on the world” (p. 29).

Barrett (2014) suggests that a leaders’ personal transformation is a first step in inspiring a group’s transformation to becoming a ‘conscious organization.’ Forman and Ross (2013) explain that collective groups of people (e.g., organizations) share a common level of meaning-making, which typically reflects the meaning-making level of the group’s leader. As such, Barrett (2014) claims, “organizations don’t transform, people do” (p. xxiii). Thus, to exemplify the ethical, servant, and transformational leadership principles that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) depict as desirable to successfully enact a conscious approach to management, a leader must personally transform such that their worldview expands and their capacity to process complex issues deepens. Further, a leader’s transformation may inspire individuals to transform, which in turn, may manifest as a heightened collective consciousness within the organization.

Conscious Culture and Management

As the final tenet of Conscious Capitalism, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) identify organizational culture as “a source of great strength and stability for [an organization], ensuring that its purpose and core values endure” (p. 35). Further, Schein (1992) defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions . . . [that prescribes] the correct way to perceive, think and feel” (p. 12). In that way, a leader can establish a conscious culture to reinforce stakeholders’ commitments to the organization’s higher purpose and continually foster the benefits that arise from stakeholder integration and conscious leadership.

More specifically, Barrett (2014) explains that a strong organizational culture engages stakeholders, and through such engagement, inspires their organizational commitment and enthusiasm. Further, a strong organizational culture reduces ‘cultural entropy,’ where a misalignment of higher purpose and core values causes conflict, friction or frustration between organizational stakeholders (Barrett, 2014). Through leaders’ culture management, organizational culture is commonly thought to amplify the performance benefits of the other tenets of Conscious Capitalism, with Heskett (2012) claiming that “culture can account for up to half of the difference in operating profit between two organizations in the same business."

To summarize, the effect and influence that higher purpose can have on an organization unites to establish the Conscious Capitalism model of organizational management. In that way, the four tenets of Conscious Capitalism provide a framework to further understand—and in the current case study—investigate the presence of higher purpose within an organization. For the sake of my research, the Conscious Capitalism

model serves as a theoretical framework by which I will understand organizational purpose in the current study. A conscious model of an organization serves as a response to neoliberalist critiques of commercial sport organizations, and provides a lens by which to explore how organizational leaders can understand why their organization exists and leverage that understanding to create meaningful value for society. Applying Conscious Capitalism in a sport organizational context represents one way to respond to Zeigler's (2007) call for a greater understanding of what sport organizations truly provide to society.

Management by Values

While Conscious Capitalism serves as a theoretical framework to understand leaders' utilization of an organization's higher purpose, Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) discussion of a conscious management approach is primarily descriptive and illustrates how an organization that embraces higher purpose and core values can be conceptualized. To understand how an organization's leaders may strategically utilize their higher purpose and values, I use Management by Values (MBV) as an appropriate theoretical framework. By reviewing relevant literature, I identified a synergy between Conscious Capitalism and Management by Values models that may be useful in building an understanding of how leaders may apply Conscious Capitalism tenets through a strategic management of core values.

While Mackey and Sisodia (2013) assert that higher purpose is foundational to an organizational leaders' conscious management, these authors note that it is ultimately through the core values that leaders strategically manage their organization's higher purpose. As such, core values represent "the guiding principles [a] business uses to

realize its purpose” (Mackey, 2006). Core values are central to an organization’s ability to connect with its stakeholders (Agle & Caldwell, 1999); and in that way, core values are a vehicle for an organization’s higher purpose to be manifested in their relationship with their stakeholders.

Given Dolan and Garcia’s (2002) understanding of the significance of core values on an organization’s behaviour, they introduced the MBV framework to emphasize the strategic power of using core values in the development of policies, practices, and procedures. Using an MBV approach, organizational leaders may define and communicate value to all stakeholders and incorporate those values into all organizational activities (Jaakson, Reino, & Vadi, 2004). A leader’s utilization of an MBV approach is said to have a triple-purpose: 1) to *simplify* the organization’s direction in the face of complexity; 2) to *guide* the strategic vision of the organization; and 3) to *secure commitment* of employees, as a means to inspire improved employee performance. A leader’s definition and communication of core values is thought to provide stakeholders with greater coherence about the organization’s goals and principles, allowing stakeholders to construct a collective sense of what the organization ‘should be’ (Dolan & Garcia, 2002). In that way, MBV is thought to equip leaders to utilize core values as an empowering and strategic management resource.

In practice, MBV helps organizational stakeholders to be inspired and engaged in the beneficial manner that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) propose is possible through a conscious management approach. Researchers (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Weiner, 1988) have observed that incorporating values into an organization’s operations aligns stakeholders’ beliefs about acceptable behaviour and strategic direction, allowing an

organization to “set [itself] apart from the competition by clarifying its identity and [creating] a rallying point for employees” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 114). To validate this assumption, researcher (Corley, 2004; Dobni, Ritchie, & Zerbe, 2000; Macy, 2006) has found that there are tangibly positive benefits of managing values in an organization; specifically, employees who connect with their organization’s values are thought to find greater meaning, direction and satisfaction in their work. As well, scholars (Donker, Poff, & Zahir, 2008; Gregory, Harris, Armenakis, & Shook, 2009) find that the leaders’ alignment of organizational values correlates with positive organizational performance.

Defining Core Values

Dolan, Garcia, and Richley (2006) identified three categories of values to help illustrate how values can exist within an organization. First, *ethical-social* values guide an individual’s beliefs about what behaviours are appropriate within the organization; second, *economic-pragmatic* values relate to organizational performance, efficiency and discipline; and third, *emotional-developmental* values relate to individuals’ sense of meaning, fulfillment and intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Kerwin, Maclean, and Bell-Laroche (2014) explain these three types of values exist in the context of a sport organization, and suggest that both ethical-social and emotional-developmental values guide an organization’s relationship with society, while economic-pragmatic values are associated with organizational employees achieving objectives and performing on- and off- the sport’s field.

Outside of the sport organizational context, Mackey (2006) provides an example of core values in practice. As co-Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Whole Foods Market, Mackey (2006) states that the company’s core values are “selling the highest quality

natural and organic products available, satisfying and delighting our customers, supporting team member happiness and excellence, creating wealth, profits and growth, and caring about our communities and environment.” Leaders working within Whole Foods Market utilize these core values to unite stakeholders around their higher purpose; which is as stated, “to co-create a world where each of us, our communities and our planet can flourish. All the while, celebrating the sheer love and joy of food” (Whole Foods Market, 2016). From this example, Whole Foods Market leaders can strategically use core values to put the principles of Conscious Capitalism into action, thereby helping the organization communicate and pursue their higher purpose.

Linking Higher Purpose and Performance

Through this review, it appears that the MBV framework may be a means by which organizational leaders may operationalize the aspirational framework of Conscious Capitalism and foster the positive organizational benefits that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) attribute to a conscious approach to management. Dolan and Garcia (2002) explain, “MBV helps to channel the daily professional efforts towards the achievement of the strategic vision of where the company aims to go” (p. 102). In that way, creating the benefits of a conscious management approach may begin with the leaders’ management of core values. In fact, Kerwin et al. (2014) did find that MBV mediated the influence of values on organization performance, further suggesting that the model serves as one bridge between an organization’s higher purpose and the consequential benefits of utilizing a higher purpose.

While the relationship between higher purpose, core values, MBV and organizational performance has been explored, Gehman, Treviño, and Garud (2013)

claim that researchers need to further examine *how* values emerge in an organization and influence performance; that is, how organizational stakeholders practice values within an organization. In the context of the sport industry, Bell-Laroche, Maclean, Thibault, and Wolfe (2014) support this claim, given their study of national sport organizational leaders. While the leaders in their study understood the importance of managing core values, they were found to be unable to implement an MBV approach given their uncertainty of how to best manage their organization's values.

To further understand *how* core values are utilized, Kerwin et al. (2014) suggest that researchers could implement a qualitative design to explore how individuals in an organization define and understand the process by which MBV is conducted. The need to understand how leaders may manage higher purpose and core values in organizations leads to my second research question; that is, what strategies or practices do organizational leaders utilize to manage an organization's core values, such that they become a strategic resource to improve organizational performance.

Reflecting on Higher Purpose and Values in an Organization

Considering my research purpose and my two research questions, this study takes form as an empirical exploration and reflection on higher purpose and the management of core values for a professional sport organization. As Dolan and Garcia (2002) suggest, the first step in leveraging an organization's higher purpose and implementing an MBV approach is a "strategic reflection" (p. 112). For an organization to strategically manage their higher purpose, organizational members need to have a clear understanding of what the organization's higher purpose is and how they can put it into action.

As Dolan and Garcia (2002) describe MBV, they identify that understanding an organization's culture can lead to greater clarification towards higher purpose and core values. If higher purpose and core values shape how people approach their work, culture represents the embedding of that higher purpose and core values into a system of beliefs and behaviours within the organization. Schein (1992) further explains that organizational culture takes tangible shape in two ways. First, organizational members may express culture implicitly, through underlying beliefs or a predominant 'way of thinking.' Second, organizational members may also express culture explicitly, through cultural artifacts such as policies, employees' behaviours or company branding. Since culture represents the organization's system of beliefs, investigating both implicit and explicit levels of culture provides researchers two lenses to understand an organization's higher purpose and core values.

To locate expressions of organizational culture, Dolan, Garcia, Martin, and Templer (2001) provide an inventory of behaviours or artifacts that help develop and reinforce culture. For example, *rituals* are collective events, such as office-meetings or celebrations, whereas *symbols* are visual, tangible expressions, including the company logo or staff-uniforms. Furthermore, *company language and 'code'*, are verbal expressions, such as common slang, buzz-words, slogans, or even nicknames, *oral transmission of company 'legends and myths'* take form as dramatic back-stories of the organization's history and its founder and *rewards* represent systems that reinforce the organization's values, through financial and non-financial rewards. Finally, *communication* takes form as a two-way dialogue between the organization's leaders and the rest of the employees. All of these cultural expressions are inherently value-laden;

that is, their creation or existence is rooted in the values of the organization. Thus, these expressions may serve as a lens into an organization's core values, and in turn, its higher purpose.

To understand the degree to which leaders use these core values strategically, Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) created the '4-I Values Framework' in which the researchers describe levels of strategic management of values within an organization (see Figure 2.3). The researchers note that organizations exist at varying stages, where a leader's strategic use of values expands and deepens at each stage. At the lowest *Inactive* level, or at the degree to which values are least strategically utilized, values are dormant and leaders do not discuss them during planning or decision making. At the second, *Intuitive* level, internal stakeholders (e.g., organizational leaders, employees) commonly share values, but their diffusion and communication is leadership-dependent. By the third, *Institutional* level, leaders embed the values system-wide within the organization and their influence is evident in policy, practice and procedure. The final, *Inspirational* level, leaders strategically use values to create an organizational context in which all (internal and external) organizational stakeholders are inspired and engaged towards common objectives (i.e., the organization's higher purpose). Thus, Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014)

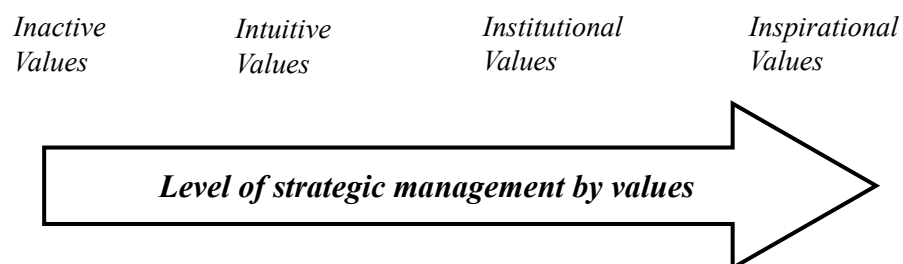


Figure 2.3 – 4-I Values Framework (Bell-Laroche, Maclean, Thibault & Wolfe, 2014)

depiction of four levels of MBV provides a theoretical framework to understand *how* leaders strategically utilize an organization's higher purpose.

Conclusion

Through a review of relevant literature, I identified the need to understand higher purpose in professional sport organizations, the ways by which higher purpose may be understood in a professional sport organization and how higher purpose may be managed strategically within a professional sport organization. Sport management scholars (Frisby, 2005; Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007) have acknowledged the need for sport organizations to exist for a higher purpose beyond profit and to reflect on what value they are contributing to their stakeholders. Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) explanation of Conscious Capitalism provides a framework to observe and describe an organization's higher purpose, while Dolan and Garcia's (2002) description of Management by Values serves as a framework to understand how organizational leaders can strategically utilize higher purpose. Thus, through a review of literature, the need to understand the value that sport organizations provide to their stakeholders is revealed, along with the specific management theories that can be used to understand the strategies organizational leaders utilize to maximize their contribution to their stakeholders.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methods that fulfilled the study's purpose and generated insight towards an organization's higher purpose and leaders' strategic management of core values. Given that I have defined the research purpose and provided an overview of the theoretical dialogue towards higher purpose and management of core values in organizations, I will now describe the chosen qualitative research design and relevant methodologies, in addition to specific rationale for such methodologies.

Personal Stance

Before describing the specific philosophies and research methodologies that guide the current research study, I will state my personal stance towards the issues addressed by this research. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) define a personal stance as a "researcher's position towards an issue that is derived from that person's beliefs and views about the world" (p. 70), and recommend that researchers "consider the ways in which their stances affect the choices they make" (p. 69). By engaging in a self-reflexive dialogue, I may bring attention to my personal beliefs that inspired the creation of the study and how such beliefs may have influenced the research process and outcomes.

To begin, the idea for this study emerged from my personal experiences with professional sport. As a stakeholder who has personally interacted with several sport organizations (i.e., as a consumer, as an employee, as a community member), I have developed a genuine belief that sport provides meaningful value to me, others, and communities. Alongside my stakeholder interaction with sport organizations, I am a

student of organizational management theory and practice. In this role, I have naturally compared the management practices of the sport organizations with which I have interacted to current management theories and practices of high-performing organizations. Specifically, I became captivated by both scholars and practitioners (Bloom, 2010; Collins & Porras, 1994; Mackey & Sisodia, 2013; Sinek, 2009; Sisodia et al., 2014) who spoke of ‘higher purpose’ as a powerful strategic resource for organizational leaders.

Moreover, I have observed leaders of prominent organizations, including Apple, Google, Disney and Tesla, explicitly commit their organizations to ‘a cause’ or a ‘higher purpose.’ At this point, my experiences as a stakeholder in the professional sport industry and as a student learning organizational management conflicted; while I had experienced and observed the value that professional sport organizations create, I had yet to witness leaders of a professional sport organization state a mission, higher purpose, or explicitly commit their organization to ‘a cause.’ As such, I was inspired to design a study wherein I would deeply explore how leaders of a professional sport organization might discover and utilize a higher purpose.

Pragmatic Research Paradigm

In addition to articulating my personal stance, I will now discuss my philosophical paradigm that guides the current research study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) emphasize the importance of any researcher subscribing to and utilizing a philosophical paradigm as a tool to describe how he or she views knowledge and reality and to clarify the philosophy that has informed decision making during the design of the study. In this research study, I was guided by a pragmatic paradigm, where “the truth of

an idea is dependent upon its workability; ideas or principles are true in so far as they work... [and] reality is a process or an experience” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 60). In other words, in my use of a pragmatic research paradigm, I recognized true knowledge as something that has practical effects and is useful. More specifically, useful knowledge in this research study will be recognized as knowledge that may support sport management scholars and practitioners in creating increasing value for organizational stakeholders.

Cresswell (2003) explains that pragmatic research focuses on ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions, placing “the research problem as central and [applying] all approaches to understanding the problem” (p. 11). In doing so, the pragmatic researcher aims to link theory and practice, learning and developing theory by studying practice, and then applying theory back to practice to observe its effects and usefulness. To gain insight into this practical knowledge, a researcher who uses a pragmatic philosophy adopts the methods most likely to provide the most practical insight towards the research question (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

As such, in this research study, I link the theories of Conscious Capitalism and Management by Values to the practice of organizational leaders in the professional sport industry. In so doing, I acknowledge that by using a pragmatic paradigm, I will recognize ‘truth’ by the usefulness of the knowledge generated from the study for both scholars and organizational leaders. To gain this truth, I used research methods that allowed me to observe and understand beliefs and behaviours within a professional sport organizations, to learn about the theories of Conscious Capitalism and Management by Values, and to generate further insight about their practical effects and usefulness for an organization.

Research Design and Methodology

This research followed a qualitative research design. Defined by Savin-Baden and Major (2013), qualitative research is “social research that is aimed at investigating the way in which people make sense of their ideas and experiences” (p. 11). This particular research design contrasts with a quantitative approach that is grounded in a positivist philosophy. While positivism suggests that there is a single, ‘true,’ objective reality waiting to be discovered, qualitative research aims to understand reality from people’s subjective perspectives given its underlying philosophies that multiple realities exist through one’s subjective exploration of personal perspectives.

Within a pragmatic paradigm, qualitative research serves as a medium to reconcile theory and practice in a natural context (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Thus, in this study, a qualitative research design allowed me to explore and practically apply Conscious Capitalism and Management by Values in the dynamic environment of an organization. It is also important to note that in line with the qualitative research tradition, the findings of this research will not make any causal or universal claims; instead, they represent a potentially insightful example of a sport organization’s higher purpose and how organizational leaders can manage the values associated with the organization’s higher purpose in their management practice.

Descriptive Case Study

To fulfill on the research purpose and answer the guiding research questions, I used a case study approach. Yin (1994) describes the case study approach as a comprehensive research strategy by which a researcher may investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. Observing a phenomenon in its ‘natural environment’

is thought to provide the researcher with the best opportunity to holistically and meaningfully understand complex phenomena. With a case study approach, I was able to study my phenomenon of interest directly, exploring the presence and management of higher purpose within the boundaries of a professional sport organization.

Furthermore, to align the case study approach with my research purpose, I conducted a particular type of case study called a descriptive case study. Yin (2003) explains that case studies have three potential purposes, including: 1) to provide explanation; 2) to further explore; and 3) to provide description. A researcher uses an explanatory case study to explain why certain variables relate to one another, while he or she uses an exploratory case study to learn about a new, unstudied phenomenon. Otherwise, a researcher uses a descriptive case study to present a detailed account of the subject of study (Yin, 1994). In that way, through the use of a descriptive case study, a research can answer ‘what’ questions, to achieve research goals that aim to describe “the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon” (Yin, 2003, p. 6). Additionally, a researcher uses theory to guide the case description, specifically using concepts from previous literature to ‘know where to look’ for insight (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). With this research aiming to understand the presence and management of higher purpose in a professional sport organization, using a descriptive case study provided me an opportunity to observe and describe the ways in which higher purpose appeared within the organization under study.

Pragmatic Methodology

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest that researchers enact the case study approach through a specific research methodology, thereby creating “an altered and

synergistic version of the approach, making the approach, for example, more holistic, particularistic, contextual, descriptive and concrete” (p. 157). Thus, in alignment with my research paradigm, this case study approach followed a pragmatic methodology.

Since a pragmatic research paradigm makes the research question central to the study, a pragmatic methodology encouraged me to choose the data collection and analyses methods that were “most likely to provide insight into the question, without any loyalty to a specific research tradition” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 61). Thus, I could take the position of the ‘interested observer,’ from which I could observe individuals, artifacts and documents within the research site to view the research phenomena in context and observe the theories of interest in practice (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Specifically, a pragmatic methodology in this study allowed me to gain insight towards how higher purpose and management of core values existed within the context of an organization, using any methods that allowed for an appropriate and trustworthy description of the case organization.

Research Site

This study was designed as a single-case study, as the research was bounded around one professional sport organization. As Yin (2003) describes, a researcher can investigate either single- or multiple-cases, depending on the scope of the project. I utilized a *convenience sampling* strategy to select the case site (Tracy, 2013), as my personal connection to a professional sport organization as a former employee provided an easier opportunity to negotiate access with organizational gatekeepers and select this particular sport organization as a single-site in the current research study. I bounded the case site by speaking with the organization’s full-time employees in their business

operations departments, including ticket sales, corporate partnerships, guest experience, marketing, communications, community relations, retail, stadium operations, finance and administration. Additionally, I bounded my observations to be within the organization's office building, which serves as the organization's primary workspace.

Beyond the convenient opportunity to research this sport organization due to my personal connection as a former employee, I chose this organization as an appropriate case for this study as it serves as a *representative* or a *typical case* for studying a professional sport organization. Yin (2003) explains that one rationale for adopting a single-case study design is to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation" (p. 41). In that way, this organization was chosen as a single-case site to represent similar organizations in the same industry (i.e., professional sport organizations whose primary business is to field a professional sport team). While not seeking to be generalizable, "the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average person or institution" (Yin, 2003, p. 41).

This organization is a justified representative of a typical professional sport organization for several reasons. First, it exists as a professional sport organization, competing in a prominent professional sport league. The organization fields a team in a national sport league which features nine teams across the organization's home country, and the organization has competed in this league since the league was founded in 1958. Spectatorship at this organization's games is comparable to some of the world's top sporting leagues, as in 2015, the organization averaged over 24,000 spectators per home game, which is comparable to the wider league's average of nearly 25,000 spectators per game. The league is also the country's second most watched sporting league, as a survey

showed that 26% of the country's citizens claim they follow the league through television, social media or other popular media.

Second, the organization is structured and governed in the same manner as a typical professional sport franchise. As Hums and MacLean (2013) describe, a professional sport organization is comprised of owners (owning the organization as a private corporation) and the front-office staff, who operate the business on a day-to-day basis. This organization features this same organizational structure, with an individual who privately owns the team and a front-office staff of approximately fifty employees who manage all daily operations.

Third, the organization is representative of the commercialization of professional sport, as Zeigler (2007) and Newman (2014) both critique. As stated, the organization is a private, for-profit organization, and much of the public dialogue concerning the organization's management has surrounded its pursuit of profit. For example, a media headline about the organization's business operations reads '[the organization] expect to be in the black for first time in decades.'

Finally, from my time spent attending this organization's events, it is vividly apparent to me that the organization's team has a deep connection with their local community. This is exemplified by sold-out games (i.e., with over 24,000 spectators), the existence of team fan clubs, the amount of team logos posterred on walls, cars or clothing around the team's city, or the greetings and celebratory remarks I receive when I wear my own team t-shirt. Based upon these observations, I presume that the organization is currently creating forms of value for its fans and community members (e.g., cultural wealth, social wealth). With the case organization resembling the governance of a typical

professional sport organization as outlined by Hums & MacLean (2013), the commercial aspects of the neoliberalist sport industry as discussed by Newman (2014) and Zeigler (2007), and the probable (yet unstated) social contribution of professional sport organizations, I believe the organization suitably represents an appropriate representative case for the current single-site case study.

Negotiating Access to the Research Site

Tracy (2013) explains that communicating with a ‘gatekeeper’ is essential to accessing a research site for fieldwork, as a researcher should only investigate a research site if an individual of authority approves access. Thus, I gained approval from the leader of the organization’s business operations and utilized this individual as the ‘gatekeeper’ for this research study. To gain approval, I first sent the gatekeeper a letter of invitation, in which I explained the purpose of the research study, the proposed methods of study, the benefit for organizational leaders and individual employees, the plan to provide confidentiality for the organization and any individuals involved in the research, and my intention to share the research findings through academic publications or conference presentations (see Appendix A).

After this gatekeeper received and reviewed the letter of invitation, we had a face-to-face meeting together in which we discussed the proposed research and negotiated specific conditions of access. At the conclusion of this meeting, the gatekeeper agreed to allow access for the research. To finalize the access negotiation process, I asked the gatekeeper to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) that confirms the agreed upon conditions for my access to study employees, organizational workspaces and organizational documents for the research study.

Ethical Considerations

Studying an organization through a case study approach requires ethical consideration, since I observed, recorded, and am reporting private information and interactions. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest that research ethics “are the ‘correctness’” of a particular behaviour” (p. 319), where the researcher’s moral principles govern the treatment of research subjects in a study. While studying this organization, it was my goal to respect and ethically manage the interests of organizational leaders and individual research participants.

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), the qualitative researcher must consider ethical aspects of the research methodology, including informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. As such, I utilized strategies to ensure that both the organization and individual employees were treated ethically in these areas. First, I sought formal approval and consent from organizational leaders to study the organization. Second, to respect the organization’s right to privacy itself, I offered the organizational leaders confidentiality for the organization by intentionally excluding the organization’s name in the final research report.

Concerning the ethical treatment of individuals, I informed all organizational employees of the nature of the research project and the potential benefits to the organization, and emphasized that there was no obligation to participate and that there is no punishment for a lack of participation or withdrawal from the research. I offered research participants confidentiality to respect their personal privacy and to provide each person protection in the case that any one shared controversial opinions. Additionally, to maintain confidentiality for individuals, I utilized no individual identifiers in the final

research report. Finally, I stored all data collected on a password-protected USB-storage device that was accessible only by my supervising professor and I to ensure that data were secure and the individual identities of participants remained confidential.

Data Collection

To create a case description, I recorded observations of the case site into forms that can be examined and analyzed. These case study data served as evidence to represent the case site, from which I analyzed and used to answer the research questions. Yin (2003) explains that with a case study approach, evidence can come from several sources, as a researcher immerses him or herself in the site and finds insight in various ways. Yin (2003) further explains that by using multiple sources of evidence and by triangulating data sources, a researcher may develop “converging lines of inquiry” (p. 98), whereby he or she understands a phenomenon from different points of view to create a more accurate and convincing case study.

Based upon the access to the site negotiated with the gatekeeper, I utilized interviews, observation, and documents as data sources. As Schein (1992) explains, an organization’s culture expresses its shared values at both implicit (i.e., beliefs, assumptions) and explicit (i.e. artifacts, behaviour, procedures) levels. Thus, through data collection strategies, I aimed to study organizational culture at both the implicit and explicit levels. While interviewing, I attempted to access the implicit level of culture by exploring each individual’s perspectives and experiences with the organization. Further, through observation and documents, I attempted to access explicit cultural expressions by examining both what the company does (e.g., behaviours, organizational charts, procedures) and what the organization superficially ‘appears’ to be to external

constituents (e.g., logos, physical buildings, public communication). Data collection occurred within a 2-month period during the organization's off-season (i.e., February, March) during which time the organization's programming was significantly decreased and employees had a greater opportunity to take time to reflect on organizational behaviour during an interview.

Interview Method

As the primary data source in this study, I sought to learn about the organization's higher purpose and management of higher purpose directly from the organization's employees. As Heyl (2001) explains, "interviewing has long been utilized in sociology as a way of shedding light on the personal experiences, interpersonal dynamics and cultural meanings of participants in their social worlds" (p. 372). In that way, I explored and further understood cultural meanings (i.e., higher purpose and core values) by capturing the perspectives of those within the case site. Kvale (1996) explains that the original Latin meaning of 'conversation' is "wandering together with" (p. 4); interviews allowed me to create a collaborative exploration of the organization's higher purpose and management of core values by including the actors of the scene itself.

When preparing for the interviews, I utilized Heyl's (2001) four considerations for managing an interview. While these four considerations are specific to ethnographic interviewing where the researcher is an embedded participant in the research site, my stance as a former employee of the organization positioned me with a degree of familiarity, a set of assumptions and relationships with participants that would be similar to that of an ethnographic researcher.

As such, I was first advised as an interviewer to listen, be respectful, and actively engage with the interviewee. Second, I was advised to be self-aware of my role in the co-construction of meaning during the interview. Since I entered the interview with my own perspective of the organization of study, awareness of my influence on the construction of meaning prompted me to continuously bracket my perspective and focus on engaging with the participant's perspective. Third, I was cognizant of how my relationship with the interviewee and the organization could have potentially effected the interview process and the project outcomes. I had personal relationships with many of the participants as former co-workers, so I focused on creating an interview environment where participants could be comfortable and authentic, without feeling obligated to answer questions in any particular manner. Lastly, it was important for me to recognize that "dialogue is discovery" (Heyl, 2001, p. 370) and any insight gathered from an interview was potentially only partial knowledge, rather than holistic depictions of the phenomenon.

Participant Selection

Regarding interview participants, I aimed to speak with full-time employees of the organization, as they are the individuals who experience, manage, and interact daily with the organization's culture. This represents a *purposeful sampling strategy*, where I purposefully chose Participants based upon the parameters of the research questions and the case site (Tracy, 2013). More specifically, this is a *criterion sampling strategy*, as I chose a participant group based upon a criterion of being an employee of the organization under study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

During the data collection process, I aimed to interview 11-14 employees. However, I was not bound to this range as a definite number, as Tracy (2013) claims that

guidelines for determining a sample size for qualitative research is “unabashedly ambiguous” (p. 138). Kvale (1996) suggests researchers should interview “[as] many as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p. 101), collecting data until a point of saturation when new insight is no longer being presented in interviews.

With the organization’s full-time staff including approximately fifty employees, my intention was to conduct 8-10 interviews with middle- to low-level employees (i.e., coordinators, managers) and 3-4 interviews with leaders of the organization (i.e., directors, vice-presidents), for a total of approximately 11-14 interviews. If from this range of interviews data saturation was not possible and new perspectives were being presented in each interview, I had planned to conduct further interviews until data saturation would be reached. Due to my own resource limitations in the conduct of the study, I intended to not exceed a total number of 20 interviews.

Participant Recruitment

To recruit interview participants, I utilized email communication to send a note of invitation to all current full-time employees of the organization with publicly accessible email addresses ($n=42$). Similar to the letter I had previously sent to the organization’s gatekeeper, I explained the purpose of the research study in this letter, and further detailed the proposed interview method and the benefit for interview participants. Additionally, I stated in the letter that individuals had no obligation to participate and I concluded the letter by requesting that potential participants reply to me by email to state their interest in participating and to schedule an interview (See Appendix B). Following the distribution of this recruitment letter, eighteen employees replied with their interest in participating.

To schedule interviews with participants, I continued to utilize email communication to coordinate the date, time, and location of each interview. First, I provided a list of dates and times for the participant to select for his or her interview. Second, I provided the participant with the choice of two potential interview locations based upon Tracy's (2013) recommendation of providing several location options and allowing the participant to choose what is best for him or her. The first interview location was the participant's individual office in the organization's office building, whereas the second location was a private boardroom in the organization's office building (i.e., an option previously approved by the organizational gatekeeper in the access negotiation process). After providing each participant with these options, I requested each participant reply to me in an email, indicating his or her selection of a specific date, time and location for the interview. I then provided a confirmation email to formally schedule the interview. To remind the participant of the interview, I sent a reminder email to the participant the day before the scheduled interview.

Of the 18 employees that stated interested in participating, a total of 13 participated in interviews. Specifically, in recruiting middle- to low-level employees (i.e., coordinators, managers), I invited 24 and 14 replied with interest, which exceeded the recruitment goal of 8-10 participants. Of these 14 interested middle- to low- level employees, 11 actually participated in interviews, while two participants removed themselves from participation due to scheduling conflicts. I declined one other participant to avoid exceeding the recruitment goal, given that this individual stated interest after I had fulfilled the recruitment goal and all other interviews had been scheduled.

Furthermore, I invited 14 organizational leaders and 4 replied stating their interest in participating, which would have fulfilled my recruitment goal of 3-4 participants. Of the four who stated interest, two participated in interviews, whereas one removed themselves due to scheduling conflicts and one other did not reply to a next email communication after stating interest. See Table 3.1 for a summary of participant recruitment.

Participant	Invited	Interest	Participated
Middle- to Low-level Employees	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 11
Organizational Leaders	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 4	<i>n</i> = 2
<i>Total</i>	<i>n</i> = 42	<i>n</i> = 18	<i>n</i> = 13

Table 3.1 – Summary of Participant Recruitment

Interview Protocol

As a research protocol, I utilized concepts from Tracy's (2013) recommendations for qualitative interview practice. To ensure interview data were preserved for analysis, I audio-recorded all interviews using a digital voice recorder. Then, I began the interview process with several steps to 'open the interview.' First, I attempted to '*break the ice*' with the Participant through a casual greeting and an appreciative comment for him or her agreeing to participate in the research study. I then *set expectations* and parameters for the interview, by briefing the Participant on the purpose of the study, length of the interview and the topics we were to discuss in the interview, as well as having the Participant read and sign the informed consent form (see Appendix C).

After the Participant completed signing the informed consent form, I turned on the digital voice recorder and asked the first interview questions. I continued the process of 'breaking the ice' by asking the Participant a *factual question* about his or her's

employment tenure with the organization, an *open-ended experience question* to prompt a story from the Participant about how he or she came to be a part of this organization, and a *tour question* to ask the Participant to explain their role with the organization. In asking these questions, I helped to engage us both in generating context for the Participant's relationship with the organization and to prepare him or her for a deeper dialogue about their experiences with the organization.

Once I had opened the interview, I utilized several *generative questions* that aimed to generate discussion and explore the Participant's perspective and experience (Tracy, 2013). I first asked questions that explored the Participant's definition of the organization's higher purpose. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) define higher purpose as "the reason a company exists" (p. 33), while stating, "purposeful companies ask questions such as these: Why does our business exist? Why does it need to exist? What core values animate the enterprise and unite all of our stakeholders" (p. 34). Thus, to address RQ1 (i.e., What higher purpose do stakeholders of a professional sport organization espouse?), I asked generative questions whereby the Participant could discuss his or her perspective towards the organization's existence and the core values that unite organizational stakeholders. In doing so, I asked the Participant to explain his or her own perception of the organization's existence, a perception of how others would define the organization's existence, and a perception of the core values that organizational stakeholders share. See Table 3.2 and Appendix D for the generative questions that addressed RQ1.

To address RQ2 (What practices are used to manage and strategically utilize this higher purpose?), I further utilized generative questions to explore the Participant's

GIQ1. Why do you believe this organization exists? [Probe to explore the value the organization provides to them; Follow-up question: what would happen if the organization didn't exist?]

GIQ2. How do you think others (including fellow employees, customers, corporate partners, etc.) would explain why the organization exists? [Probe to explore the value the organization provides to those stakeholders]

GIQ3. For those involved with the organization (e.g., employees, customers, partners, etc.), what do you believe some common values would be?

Table 3.2 – Interview Guide: Generative Questions for all participants

perspective and experiences with organizational leaders' management of core values. Since both middle- to low-level employees and organizational leaders were recruited as participants, I created separate protocols for each employee group. Following Tracy's (2013) recommendations, I conducted *respondent interviews* with middle- to low-level employees, where through our discussion, we explored each Participant's personal perception and experiences of organizational leaders' management of values. With those Participants who occupied leadership positions (i.e., directors, vice-presidents), I conducted *informant interviews*, where the Participant provided a holistic, broader perspective of the organization, rather than just his or her individual perspective. Through informant interviews, these Participants had the direct opportunity to reflect on their own leadership and management strategies they used to manage the organization's potential higher purpose.

For respondent interviews, I asked each Participant to describe how he or she experiences core values (i.e., the values that they believe stakeholders share) during their work with the organization. Since a Participant's perception could have ranged from never experiencing core values (e.g., 'they are never discussed'; an inactive level (Bell-

Laroche et al., 2014)) to experiencing them continuously in their work (e.g., ‘they inspire me every day’; an inspirational level (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014)), each Participant reflected on leaders’ strategies to enact higher purpose in the organization and how leaders strategically manage organizational core values. See Table 3.3 and Appendix D for the interview guide for informant interviews.

RIQ1. How do you think those common values we spoke of appear in your work or within the organization? [Probe for examples of management behavior that engages common values]

Table 3.3 – Interview Guide: Respondent Interview for middle- to low-level employees

For informant interviews, I asked participants to describe how they integrate core values into their management and decision making within the organization. Questions aimed to explore the participant’s beliefs about the importance of core values in the management of the organization, their perception of how organizational leaders strategically utilize core values, and their perception of how they utilize core values in their management. These questions were based upon the interview guide created by Bell-Laroche et al. (2014), through which leaders of sport organizations were led in an exploration of how core values were being used in their organization. See Table 3.4 and Appendix D for the interview guide for informant interviews.

I finished all interviews with the process that Tracy (2013) refers to as ‘closing the interview’, where I executed final questions and procedural steps to ensure a cathartic and comfortable end to the interview. The last question I asked was a *catch-all question*, where I attempted to capture any perspectives that had not yet been fully explored. I first reminded the participant of the purpose of the interview, and then prompted the

IIQ1. Do you believe that organizational values are important in the daily management of your organization? [Probe for why; examples of values in action, how common, outcomes.]

IIQ2. To what extent do you think your organization is intentionally using its organizational values to achieve its objectives? [Probe for reasons and examples; ways they could be more intentional; role of organizational values in shaping culture of organization and influence behavior.]

IQ3. I am curious about your current management philosophy and the extent to which you believe it is taking into account your organization's values. [Probe for current approach and how well it works; major issues within organization; examples of optimal functioning, and degree to which it is reflected in organization's values; MBV, and their comments on the approach.]

Table 3.4 – Interview Guide: Informant Interview for organizational leaders

participant to speak to anything else that he or she believed to be important or relevant. I finished the interview by re-expressing my gratitude, reassuring confidentiality to the participant's identity, and reminding him or her that withdrawing from the research was possible at any time, if desired, without consequence. After conducting the interview, the recorded audio was exported from the digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim using ExpressScribe software.

Observation

Observation as a data source in qualitative research is utilized to systematically describe events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting of the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In a case study, Yin (2003) explains that a researcher's direct observation through a physical visit of the case site can provide him or her an opportunity to witness relevant behaviours or environmental conditions that can be valuable sources of data. Specific to organizations, Yin (2003) suggests that observations of physical buildings or work spaces can provide insight to the state of the organization. Further,

given Schein's (1992) explanation that organizational culture is observable through 'cultural artifacts' (e.g., physical aspects, external image of the organization), I utilized observation of the case site as a second source of data, where I observed cultural artifacts that could provide insight towards the higher purpose or management of core values within the organization.

Specifically, I directed my observation toward physical characteristics, features, and items within the communal spaces within the organization's office building (e.g., lobbies, social spaces). Given that the public does not typically access these areas, I gained permission from the organization's gatekeeper to conduct observation. Within these communal spaces, I utilized Dolan et al.'s (2001) inventory of cultural behaviours and artifacts to guide my observation and to help me locate physical artifacts of the organization that might serve as expressions of culture. For example, given that *rituals*, *symbols*, *company language* and *'code'*, *transmission of company 'legends'*, *rewards*, and *communication* may all be expressed through signage, physical images, conditions of work areas or other physical elements of the office building, I directed observations towards artifacts that could be media for these cultural expressions.

As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2001) explain, "observation involves not only gaining access to and immersing oneself in new social worlds, but also producing *written accounts and descriptions* that bring versions of these worlds to others" (p. 352). Thus, I observed organizational artifacts and I fixed that social reality into an examinable form through fieldnote writing. To write the fieldnotes, I utilized Emerson, Fretz & Shaw's (1995) *sketching* convention, where in a sketch, the researcher illustrates a scene through vividly described impressions or sensory details of what he or she observes. Thus, in

journalistic fashion, I attempted to describe the *who, what, where, and when* of what I observed through my field notes. I conducted observations in the organization's work spaces after the average employee's workday finished (i.e., after 5:00PM). During the processes of observing and noting, I was selective about that to which I gave attention, utilizing Dolan et. al's (2001) inventory of cultural behaviours and artifacts as a guide to identify significant observations that were related to the organization's expression of higher purpose or evidences of management of core values.

Document Analysis

My final data source constituted organizational documents. Yin (2003) explains that a researcher may find benefit in collecting documents as a data source to support or build upon other data sources in a case study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) note that "people inhabit worlds that are increasingly documented" (p. 403), as people's lives and work are often recorded and preserved in personal or organizational documents.

Documents became an examinable resource that served as a lens into the realities of research subjects. As with observation, documents assisted me in studying the explicit level of organizational culture and provided me with insight towards what the organization does (e.g., within organizational charts, procedures) and what the organization appears to be to external constituents (e.g., logos, public communication).

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) identify specific types of documents that I aimed to collect while conducting my fieldwork, given their importance to qualitative research. First, *public documents* represent publically accessible items (e.g., articles, public speeches, books). In relation to my case site, public documents included media coverage of the organization, external press-releases, or published writing appearing on the

organization's website. Second, *practical documents* are written products used by organizational members (e.g., training manuals, intra-office memos). Third, *visual documents* are either of a public or an internal nature, and includes visual items that may be relevant expressions of the organization's culture (e.g., photographs, logos, images). Fourth, *audio visual documents* include videos published on the organization's website or narrated slideshows distributed within the organization.

During my fieldwork, I informed the organizational gatekeeper about my desire to access such documents and requested that they provide me with any organizational documents that could be relevant to the research study. Additionally, I collected documents from public sources; for example, I analyzed the organization's website and I utilized a web search with keywords from Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) Conscious Capitalism framework (i.e., with the organization's name and key-words such as 'business,' 'mission,' 'values,' and 'profit') to collect press publications and other media that discussed the organization.

Upon collecting these organizational documents, I combined them with the recorded observations of physical artifacts in the organization's work space to create a description of the explicit-level of culture in the organization. Further, when I combined these two data sources with interview data, I felt able to describe both the explicit and implicit levels of culture in the organization with the complete data set, and I was provided with the necessary information needed to describe the potential higher purpose of the organization and the leaders' strategies used to manage organizational core values.

Data Analysis

To analyze these data, I attempted to reduce these data into descriptive themes to contextualize higher purpose and management of core values within the organization. Guided by Yin's (2003) notion of a case description, I described the major patterns within participant experiences and my cultural observations relevant to my research questions. In doing so, I developed a case description wherein I could provide insight toward a contextual understanding of what serves as a higher purpose for this organization and what strategies leaders use to manage the core values associated with the organization's higher purpose.

Furthermore, I used theoretical frameworks from Mackey and Sisodia (2013) and Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) to guide this analysis. Yin (2003) explains that using theoretical frameworks during data analysis can focus attention towards what is relevant in these data. Since the research questions and data collection methods are both grounded in the propositions of these two theoretical frameworks, I knew 'where to look' while analyzing these data. Specifically, I used Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) description of four types of higher purpose to guide my analysis, which provided me with a framework to define the organization's potential higher purpose. Then, I utilized Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework to further guide my data analysis, which provided me a framework to understand how organizational leaders strategically managed organizational core values.

Creating a Typology

I created a typology as an analysis strategy to provide a simple, yet thorough description of the case through my qualitative analysis process. As Tracy (2013)

describes, a typology serves as a classification systems, where a researcher organizes collected data into ‘conceptual bins’ that describe ‘the ways of doing something.’ With this study attempting to describe the potential higher purpose of an organization and the practices leaders use to manage that higher purpose, creating a typology allowed me to effectively organize and present my findings. Each ‘conceptual bin’ represented a key insight into the presence and management of higher purpose, by which I could fully illustrate the ways in which others perceived the phenomena in the research site.

To organize data into ‘conceptual bins,’ I used a two-stage coding process, as described by Tracy (2013). I first imported all data, including interview transcripts, fieldnote sketches and organizational documents, into the NVivo qualitative analysis software. Next, I began the process of coding by undergoing a *primary coding-cycle*, using NVivo as a digital platform to conduct the coding process. In this coding stage, I conceptualized data through short, *descriptive codes*, creating symbolic representations of the behaviours, events or emotions presented in interviews, observations, and organizational documents. Further, I integrated all descriptive codes into one comprehensive code list, allowing for data from the three data collection sources to converge and triangulate (Tracy, 2003).

After I reduced these data to descriptive codes and integrated all these codes together into a comprehensive list, I organized the descriptive codes into typologies through Tracy’s (2013) process of *second-cycle coding*. During this stage, I examined the essence of each relevant unit of meaning and searched for natural patterns or groupings between codes. Hycner (1985) explains the importance of the researcher’s ‘artistic judgments’ at this stage, where he or she relies on intuition and familiarity with these data

for clusters that are true to the nature of the phenomenon. As Yin (2003) suggests, I used the two theoretical frameworks to guide this analysis stage; specifically, I constructed the typology by using Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) four types of higher purpose and the second typology using Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework as the 'conceptual bins.' Based upon the meaning I perceived for each code, I categorized the code to relate to one of the four types of higher purpose (i.e., The Good, The True, The Beautiful, The Heroic (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013)) or one of the MBV levels (i.e., Inactive, Intuitive, Institutional, Inspirational (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014)). During this second-cycle of coding, I could create a typology that described both the espoused higher purpose of the organization and the MBV by organizational leaders. This typology enabled me to define which type or types of higher purpose were espoused by organizational stakeholders, and to determine how organizational leaders strategically utilize higher purpose.

Trustworthiness

Throughout these chosen research methods, I adopted strategies that ensured the case description was an authentic and trustworthy representation of the organization's culture. While positivist traditions evaluate research based upon validity or reliability, qualitative research aims to simply ensure that research is of quality and can be trusted (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In line with the qualitative research tradition, I did not intend to cultivate findings that are objectively 'true.' Instead, I sought to cultivate findings that were sincere and credible; it is ultimately intended that sport management scholars and practitioners can trust any findings or 'lessons learned' from this research study.

First, I attempted to demonstrate my sincerity throughout this study by being reflexive and transparent. Describing my personal stance and philosophical paradigm showed that I am aware of my perspective and how my epistemological lens influenced any research outcomes (Tracy, 2013). Additionally, since I entered this research as a former employee of the specific organizational under study, I was predisposed with beliefs and perspectives about the organization. As such, I wrote a ‘pre-entry’ self-reflection that discusses answers to the research questions that I predicted or expected to find a priori to data collection, which raised my self-awareness to previously unstated beliefs such that I could actively bracket them and listen to alternative perspectives while collecting and analyzing these data (See Appendix E).

As well, I tried to clearly explain the various data collection and analyses techniques, as a means to be open and honest about how I conducted this research study. By practicing reflexivity and transparency, I hoped to have demonstrated that I approached this research honestly and provided potential readers every opportunity to understand the research philosophies that guided how I conducted this research study.

Finally, I implemented methodological strategies to ensure that my description of the case site could be considered credible. My thoroughly defined interview practice, combined with insights from observation of organizational artifacts and analysis of organizational documents, was meant to provide “a credible account of a cultural, social, individual or communal sense of the ‘real’” (Richardson, 2000, p. 254). I crafted my approach to provide a ‘thick description’ of the case, where depictions of individual experiences with the organization and expressions of organizational culture were fully described (Bochner, 2000; Tracy, 2013). As well, by including three data sources (i.e.,

interviews, observation, document analysis), I could triangulate findings so as to provide perspectives of the phenomenon from different points (Yin, 2003). Together, thick description and triangulation allowed me to provide a detailed case description so that readers could perceive the findings as credible and trustworthy.

Conclusion

The methods described in this chapter served as a platform to gain the understanding and insight needed to address the stated research purpose and questions. Additionally, the research study was designed to align with my personal stance and research philosophy, maintain connections with the relevant sport management and management literature, and align with sound methodological strategies such that I could provide a trustworthy description of the espoused higher purpose of the organization and how organizational leaders strategically utilize higher purpose in their management of the organization.

By creating a descriptive example of how higher purpose can exist within a sport organization, it may now be possible to respond to existing needs within the sport management literature, as outlined by Frisby (2005), Newman (2014) and Zeigler (2007), and reflect upon the *why* this professional sport organization, while generating insight towards how this organization's leaders can utilize such 'consciousness' to improve organizational performance and further foster the creation of meaningful value for their stakeholders.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I describe the findings from these data collected while exploring and observing the case organization. As Savin-Baden and Major (2013) state, the findings chapter is the “researchers’ opportunity to tell the story that they found contained in the[se] data” (p. 510). In doing so, I present perspectives on the phenomenon of study from three sources, including: a) interviews with organizational employees; b) observation of physical artifacts in the organization’s workplace; and c) private and public organizational documents. First, I describe data relevant to stakeholders’ espoused higher purpose and utilize Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) four types of higher purpose as a framework to present these data. Second, I describe data relevant to leaders’ strategic management of higher purpose, using Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-I Values Framework to guide this description. Finally, I will present stakeholders perceptions of how the case organization’s cultural environment impacts them and influences their interactions with other stakeholders. Together, these data allow me to create a description of the case site that assists me in answering the two research questions and in fulfilling the research purpose.

Higher Purpose in the Case Organization

To begin, I discuss findings that are revealing of the case organization’s higher purpose, thereby addressing Research Question 1 (RQ1). The description of the organization’s higher purpose first develops from the perspectives of organizational employees, as I asked them to respond to interview questions such as, ‘why does this organization exist?’ and ‘what would happen if the organization did not exist?’ (see

Appendix D for the full interview guide). Through my observations of organizational artifacts and an analysis of organizational documents, I corroborated these perspectives to reach a holistic description of the organization's espoused higher purpose. To define the organization's higher purpose, I used Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) four types of higher purpose to analyze these data. In the following section, I use this typology to present the findings.

The Good

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) define 'The Good' as "service to others – improving health, education, communication, and quality of life" (p. 59), and was found to be the most commonly espoused higher purpose within the case site. Specifically, every Participant referred to improvements to the quality of life for stakeholders as a reason that the organization exists; furthermore, through observing organizational artifacts and analyzing documents, I could corroborate that organizational stakeholders also expressed an intention to be of service to others. This particular higher purpose was expressed in various ways, with Participants believing organizational events and programs to: 1) create entertainment and positive experiences for customers; 2) contribute to an individual's development of identity; 3) foster a sense of community identity and unity; 4) be a source of community pride; and 5) provide a platform for social relationships. Each of these aspects are described below.

Creating Entertainment and Positive Experiences

When discussing the purpose of the organization, participants most often spoke to the impact of the entertainment experiences that the organization's events provide. Said simply by Participant 2, "why we exist, being people enjoy watching [sports]."

Participants commonly presented this perspective; given several claiming “if you’re either a casual or a die-hard fan going to games, you just think the [organization’s team] exist for your viewing pleasure” (P5); “people attend the games to be entertained” (P3); and, “[it’s] just a happiness thing, right? Like, just genuinely gives people the upmost of joy” (P6). An organizational leader (P10) further stated, “we open our doors ten dates a year, and have everyone in At the end of the day . . . it’s those ten days . . . that’s where the value comes from.”

Further, I specifically observed a strong value espoused within the case organization toward creating positive experiences for customers at events. For example, an organizational leader claimed in a newspaper interview (i.e., a public document), “we get up every day to deliver the best live viewing experience in [our country for] sports.” Further, the stated staff objective within a training manual for part-time, front-line staff reads “to always go [above and beyond] to create an incredible guest experience.” As such, employees’ key source of purpose seemed to surround creating these positive experiences for people, with Participant 8 stating, “you do your best day-in and day-out and it all culminates in the fan experience that you put on for people,” while Participant 4 noted “our goal, theoretically, is to win championships and create a positive entertainment experience for our fans.”

A sense of purpose towards creating positive experiences for individuals was found to be continuously present, as represented in programs beyond the organization’s sporting events. For example, videos featured on the organization’s website showed examples of employees hosting programs in the community (i.e., team players visiting children’s hospitals and elementary schools). Participant 8 addressed these programs,

noting “when the players go out to the hospitals . . . they can bring happiness to families who are going through a hard time, and . . . it gives people something to talk about and smile about . . . and it just brings a little bit of joy.” Further, an organizational leader discussed the team’s visit to a children’s hospital within an interview found published on the organization’s website, acknowledging, “our objective for [this visit] is to bring [the children] some joy and encouragement, and hopefully, a bit of fun.”

Participants also thought the value of organizational programs extends beyond events to have a lasting impact for individuals through the creation of special memories. An organizational leader (P11) claimed, “why do we do the community programming we do? . . . We want to promote healthy and active kids . . . but . . . doing this programming is to create special memories.” Within the training manual for part-time staff, a statement reads that staff’s common purpose is to “create memorable moments that enhance the [stadium] experience and foster a lifelong [team] passion.” Participants acknowledged the benefit of positive memories, given they themselves had experienced their impact. Specifically, Participant 8 explained, “I always loved the [team] because they reminded me of when I was young and when I used to go to the games with my Dad.” From Participants’ perspectives and further observations, a strong sense of purpose was espoused towards the organization’s generation of value to individuals through the creation of entertainment and positive experiences for others during events and through programs, and that people receive lasting value through the memories they inspire from such experiences.

Developing Individual Identity

Participants espoused a second type of value that benefits the quality of life of

organizational stakeholders, referencing the organization's ability to foster a sense of individual identity. Participant 10 suggested "the team has sort of become a part of people," whereas Participant 3 added "a lot of people are die-hard fans [who] eat, sleep and breathe [the team]. So, [if the team didn't exist] . . . a lot of people would be missing a small part of them." Several participants explained that the fostering of individual identity may be observed through how both fans and consumers behave. For example, Participant 3 acknowledged they "would see people come in who have [team] tattoos. Who come in with their kids who have [team] hats, [team] shirts, [team] backpacks, [team] everything." Further, Participant 9 said, "it's hard to walk down the street and not see someone wearing a [team] hat, or [team] colours somewhere, or people's houses painted with [team] colours." Thus, Participants believed the organization inspires a sense of identity for individual stakeholders such that through the organization's identity, they could understand and express themselves.

Fostering Community Identity and Unity

Beyond individual identity, many Participants acknowledged the impact of the organization's events on identity and unity development for the collective community. Participant 9 explained, "it has become a huge part of [this] community and it's partly because people are just proud to have their own team and something to cheer for." As Participants further explained, the organization's team is "the one thing to bring everybody back together . . . something that is our own" (P6), with the organization's brand being "the logo that you can rally around" (P10).

Through the development of this collective sense of identity, Participants also thought that the organization's events, programs and products contribute to a sense of

unity within the community. For example, Participant 6 suggested the organization's team is "the one universal element that bonds the city." In that way, Participant 8 referred to the organization as "the golden thread" through the community, where Participant 11 added that the organization's events create "a sense of togetherness with other people to share a common bond . . . supporting one team and one goal." When asked 'what would happen if the organization did not exist?', Participant 5 responded, "there would be less of a sense of community . . . because I don't feel like there's any [other] big institution that really draws people together." Further, Participant 6 claimed:

there would be a lot more . . . discrepancy . . . I think it would be a lot more segregated . . . [People] wouldn't be coming together for any other reason. John in the north-end [of the city] would never meet Jay in the west-end . . . [With the organization's events], it's diverse in terms of people that come, or that are united by the team.

Upon reviewing public organizational documents, I found support for the notion that the organization is perceived to influence community identity and unity. For example, within a video published on the organization's website, a voice-over asks the question, "who are we?," and another voice-over follows, describing the characteristics that make the organization's community unique. A second video on the organization's website featured players from the organization's team explaining what makes the part of the city in which they live special and ends with the players saying in-unison, "together, we are [this city]." With organizational employees acknowledging the impact the organization has on the community's identity and with the organization's public videos further promoting the organization's unifying effect on the community, stakeholders

revealed the organization's beneficial impact on the community's unified identity as a strongly espoused source of higher purpose.

Source of Community Pride

Participants also considered the organization to be an inspiration for community pride. Participant 4 explained that organizational stakeholders "have pride in the team, and therefore, in the city." Further, Participant 6 claimed that those who interact and engage with the organization, "hold something a little bit closer to [the city]." Several participants discussed the benefit of the organization being unique and an authentic representation of their city, whereas Participant 9 said, "I think people are just proud to have their own team and something to cheer for . . . and . . . I guess it's a little more relatable than, maybe, teams in [other cities]." Organizational stakeholders further espoused this purpose through the two public videos described above, which celebrate the community's unique character and identity. Thus, Participants acknowledged the organization's ability to foster pride in its community as a source of value that could contribute to stakeholders' quality of life.

Providing a Platform for Personal Relationships

As a final element of The Good, several Participants described how the organization's events served as a platform for relationships between family and friends. For example, Participant 12 thought of the events as "a place for [people] to go with their families and have a shared experience," whereas Participant 3 believed them to be both "a spot [for people] to get together with their buddies [and] enjoy a beer or two" and a place for a "business relation where that's where [someone would] go to entertain clients."

Participants acknowledged that there are other entertainment options for friends or families to enjoy together, but the tradition of these sporting events makes them a special opportunity for togetherness. Participant 9 spoke to the phenomenon of how “if you grow up in [the city] and you go to the [team’s] games as a kid . . . when you become an adult, then you take your kids to the [team’s] games.” Participant 11 also said, “I look back at being at [games] here with my Dad, with my Mom, with my Grandpa, with [my siblings] . . . when I’m older with friends and having some drinks . . . there are moments that you will likely never forget.” Further, Participant 3 explained, “a lot of people use this as family time, where maybe the kids are a bit older and have their own families and are off in different areas, but they can get together several times a year and have that chunk of time together.”

Organizational leaders also appeared to intentionally create platforms for these relationships to be cultivated, most notably in how they planned to design the team’s stadium. For example, in a newspaper interview, an organizational leader explained that they specifically “set up and [tried] to create conducive areas” for customers to socialize at the events, so “you can meet up with your friend even if he’s on the other side of the building.” From these Participants’ perspectives and from leaders’ acknowledgement of intentional behaviours, it was found that the organization contributes to an enhanced quality of life for stakeholders through supporting and encouraging personal relationships.

The Beautiful

Organizational stakeholders also espoused a higher purpose that related to ‘The Beautiful,’ which Mackey and Sisodia (2013) describe as “the pursuit of beauty and

excellence, and the quest for perfection” (p. 62). Several employees spoke to the organization’s pursuit of excellence as being essential to its existence, while I observed with organizational artifacts and within documents a reinforced value placed on ‘winning’ and ‘success’ in the pursuit of excellence. This espoused higher purpose was expressed in two main areas, including: first, the pursuit of winning championships; and second, the aspiration to ‘be the best.’

Pursuit of Winning Championships

When considering the question, ‘why does this organization exist?’, the majority of participants referenced the organization’s pursuit of winning championships. Participant 10 claimed, “it always circles back to wanting to win. That’s what sports is all about,” whereas Participant 11 suggested that “humans are competitive by nature You want to see victory and you want to see your team be successful and come out on top.” When Participants were asked to consider how external stakeholders (e.g., customers, partners) would define ‘why the organization exists?’, they most often referenced the value placed on winning. Participant 10 explained, “at the end of the day, regardless of why you become a fan, what keeps you a fan is winning.” Further, Participant 8 suggested that a customer might respond to the question ‘why does the organization exist?’ by saying, “they haven’t won [a championship] for a long time. . . . I don’t know why they’re here!” When Participant 4 considered the perspective of the organization’s partners, they suggested, “if we’re doing really poorly and their name is coming up every time we lose, it’s not a great mental association But, if players are scoring and in the background, their name is behind the player . . . that would be winning for them, too.”

Beyond participants' perspectives, I was able to corroborate that winning championships was an often espoused higher purpose through observing organizational artifacts and reviewing organizational documents. Specifically, in the organization's office building, I noted steel plated text behind the lobby's reception desk upon which the number of championships the organization's team has won is written. Within the office, I observed several other artifacts celebrating the organization's history of winning championships, including pictures of championship teams and a collage-style painting that had players and fans alike surrounding an image of a player hoisting a championship trophy. Furthermore, I found displayed on the organization's social media profile (i.e., a public document) a biographic description of the organization (which is one sentence long) which concludes by stating the amount of championships the organization's team had won in its history. Such artifacts and the organization's public biography corroborates Participants' perspectives, demonstrating that a considerable component of how stakeholders define the organization's higher purpose is through excellence and the pursuit of winning championships.

Aspiration to 'Be the Best'

Beyond the focus on winning championships, organizational stakeholders further emphasized excellence as an espoused organizational higher purpose with the commonly discussed aspiration to 'be the best.' I found this aspiration as most explicitly demonstrated in a quote displayed in the organization's workspace that reads, "Being the best. There is no other reason to play." I found this aspiration further emphasized when I reviewed organizational documents, including a newspaper interview within which an organizational leader states, "we get up every day to deliver the best live viewing

experience.” I found similar statements on the organization’s website where the team’s stadium was characterized by comparing its amenities to those of similar stadiums; for example, “leg room between rows is the widest in [the country] for comparable facilities.” Participant 1 also referenced the organizational pursuit of being the best, explaining that employees take “pride in being the top of the league, and the top of the sports world.” This aspiration to be the best relates to organizational stakeholders’ desire to win championships, with both elements of pursuing excellence being reflective of an espoused higher purpose towards The Beautiful.

The True

The third type of higher purpose adopted from Plato’s transcendent ideals is The True, which Mackey and Sisodia (2013) define as “the search for truth and the pursuit of knowledge” (p. 61) and is characterized by stakeholder’s commitment to learn, be creative, and innovate. In this study, I found no examples of organizational stakeholders espousing The True as an organizational higher purpose, as no Participants referenced elements of The True as a reason why the organization exists and I furthermore observed no examples within organizational artifacts or documents that suggested a commitment to innovation or furthering knowledge.

Two participants did reference innovation as a core value of the organization and explained that leaders encouraged them to be creative and discover new systems and processes. For example, Participant 7 explained, “we seem to be on the cutting edge a lot of times It seems like we have this somewhat innovative culture where we’re coming up with new ways to get better and make the experience hopefully better for our customers.” Participant 3 perceived innovation as a value within the organization’s

culture as well, claiming, “we want to be on the cutting edge I feel as though we’re always trying to push the boundary.” Neither Participant responded to the question ‘why does this organization exist?’ with a reference to innovation or creativity however, and no other participants espoused this as one of their perceived organizational core values. Thus, while I found that a value for innovation did exist among stakeholders, there was no data from interviews, artifacts or documents that referenced The True as an espoused organizational higher purpose.

The Heroic

The final category of Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) typology of higher purpose is ‘The Heroic,’ defined as, the “courage to do what is right to change and improve the world” (p. 59). While Participants did not strongly espouse this type of purpose in the case site, organizational stakeholders did slightly acknowledge The Heroic as being an espoused organizational higher purpose. The Heroic was mainly espoused by organizational stakeholders through their desire to ‘give back’ to their community and their perceptions of the organizational owner’s philanthropic intentions.

Giving Back to the Community

Several Participants referenced the organization’s generosity in supporting the community as a factor to explain ‘why the organization exists.’ For example, Participant 6 acknowledged “how great the organization is to the community” and Participant 8 suggested “that sports as a whole are good for a community, and that [this organization] is here to add to the goodness of the community as a whole.” Participants recognized community programming as the organization’s medium for community service; for example, when organizational leaders have players serve as role models to deliver youth

health and nutrition programs, coaching and mentorship for high school athletes and visits to children's hospitals. Additionally, I found a specific page embedded on the organization's website on which community programming and other charitable endeavours were explained, including donation programs to local charities.

Some Participants however questioned the 'heroic' nature of the organization's community partnerships, as exemplified by Participant 10, who claimed:

[community programming] ultimately exists as a way to market the team and sell tickets, and not, 'hey . . . our community department is here to connect with youth and make impactful change.' It's right in the mission statement, but then behind the scenes, we're sort of told, ultimately, it's a cheap, free, easy way to get in front of people.

Thus, while Participants espoused The Heroic as an organizational higher purpose and while I observed this dialogue existing on the organization's website, this type was found to be less prevalent in the case site versus The Good and The Beautiful and further, some participants even expressed skepticism of the organizational leaders' degree of authenticity related to programs that espouse 'giving back to the community.'

Perceptions of the Owner's Philanthropy

Secondly, I found the organizational owner's philanthropic intentions as a commonly referenced reason for the organization's existence from both Participants and within organizational documents. For example, within a newspaper article, the author described the organization's owner as "a wealthy benefactor who salvaged the franchise from bankruptcy," purchasing the team "as a gesture to [their] late brother . . . a devoted

[fan] who died of cancer . . . but also as an act of philanthropy.” Further, Participant 8 explained:

I know [the owner] loves sports, but it wasn’t like [their] first calling was to be the owner and the GM of a sports team I think [they], more so, had the finances to do it . . . to make sure that [the organization] was doing things that make the city great and giving back.

Moreover, several Participants answered the question, ‘why does the organization exist?’ by referencing the owner’s philanthropy; for example, Participant 10 expressed that “[the owner] is the reason the team exists” and Participant 5 reasoned “I think we all recognize that that’s part of the reason that we’re all here.” Participants acknowledged that in purchasing the organization, the owner intended to do ‘what was right’ and ensure the organization and its team could continue to exist. In that way, the owner’s behaviour appears to align with The Heroic, as the owner’s financial support allowed the organization to ‘improve the world’ through a pursuit of The Good and The Beautiful.

Other Espoused Purposes

When considering the question ‘why does the organization exist?’, additional espoused purposes were found to exist that may not be considered ‘higher purposes’ according to Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) four types within their Conscious Capitalism framework. While these espoused purposes were not matched within the categories of The Good, The Beautiful, The True or the Heroic, they were still found as espoused by Participants and within organizational artifacts and documents, including: 1) the opportunity for profit; and 2) the organization’s historical existence.

Opportunity for Profit

Participants commonly referenced the organization's opportunity to generate revenue and create profit from their events, programs and products when they considered the organizational purpose that the organization's leaders espouse. For example, Participant 9 answered the question, 'why does the organization exist?' by saying, "making money. Obviously, it's a business, so I think the goal at the end of the day is that you want to make some money," while Participant 11 stated, "it exists because there's a business opportunity to make money off a professional sport franchise and monetize that experience."

While Participants spoke to espoused higher purposes beyond profit, most recognized that the pursuit of those higher purposes are embedded within a context that also desires profit. Participant 13 stated, "[the organization] exists to create revenue. It's a business, at the end of the entertainment." Participant 7 further acknowledged, "a lot of times, fans will take [the team] very personally, and then they get reminded, you know, it's a business." Participant 5 suggested that this espoused purpose has changed the organization's essence and character, saying it "has become more about the business. It's been, maybe, a 100% sport, down to 50-50 in terms of being about the [sports] and now being about revenue generation."

Several participants acknowledged that while revenue generation is an essential pursuit of the organization, it is as a means for sustainability and not merely for self-interest and accumulation. Participant 3 explained, "we exist to make money so that we're a sustainable entity where we exist year over year without fear of the team folding." In a newspaper interview, the organization's owner explained that winning a

championship would be special, but having the team “in a profitable position financially means more,” such that the organization can be sustainable. Nevertheless, the belief that the organization exists to make money was found as a prevalent source of purpose in the case site.

Historical Existence

A final commonly espoused organizational purpose that was found relates to the organization’s historical existence. Participant 12 explained, “[the organization] exists just because it’s always been here,” while Participant 6 added “the [league] has existed for forever. The [organization] has existed forever.” Further, Participant 5 suggested that “people have been following the team for, theoretically, hundreds of years,” with Participant 2 suggesting that consumers and community members engage with the organization because “it’s something they’ve always done.” Beyond this organization, Participants suggested that sport in general is rooted in a historical context, to which Participant 13 noted, “sport really was, like, the gladiators back in Rome. It was the first form of entertainment,” while Participant 11 added “just in the old times, the Coliseum . . . It’s being able to come together . . . in one place, and one common, shared experience.” Further, Participant 1 suggested that the sustained existence of the team is rooted in this historical context, explaining, “it is almost so steeped in tradition that it seems like no matter how bad things get, the people and [the city] would just never let it die.”

Further, I also observed celebrations of the organization’s historical existence in organizational artifacts and documents. In the organization’s part-time staff training manual, I read written on the first page, “you are one of the newest members of [this

organization], an organization with roots dating back to [the 1800s] that has etched itself into the history and fabric of [this] community for over 145 years.” As well, on the organization’s social media platforms, a one sentence biographic description includes a statement about the organization’s “storied history.” The organization’s history is also prominently celebrated in its workspaces, with several displayed images of historical teams, framed jerseys of historical players, and an entire hall-way decorated with historical images, including newspaper articles, game programs, and magazine covers from dates as early as the 1950s. Considering participants’ depiction of the organization’s historical context and organizational leaders’ celebration of the organization’s history within documents and artifacts, the organization’s historical existence was found to be a commonly espoused belief about ‘why the organization exists.’

Ambiguity towards a Higher Purpose

When considering the discussion above, the depth of Participants’ dialogue suggests that they believe that an organizational higher purpose exists amongst stakeholders; however, the breadth of the discussion suggests that Participants lack a consensus perception towards a common, unifying organizational purpose. Participants were found to express ambiguity towards the organization’s higher purpose through the difficulty incurred when several of them answered the question ‘why does the organization exist?,’ in addition to a discrepancy found between the different purposes Participants espoused. I corroborated this ambiguity when I triangulated participants’ responses with both my observations in the case site and with my reading of organizational documents, as I did not find a common or unifying higher purpose among expressions of organizational culture within these three data sources.

Participant Discrepancies

The initial indicator of ambiguity towards a common higher purpose amongst stakeholders was Participants' difficulty answering my direct interview question, 'why do you believe this organization exists?' For example, such ambiguity was immediately demonstrated through Participants' responses, including Participant 3's expressing, "Phew [exhale noise] . . . umm. I guess . . . ya, that's an interesting question," where Participant 8 began "Umm. I believe... hmmm... [long pause]." Participant 4 contemplated with a long pause, followed by "Hmm. [pause]. I don't know," while Participant 9 responded, "That's a tough question I think everybody would struggle with that question."

In addition, when Participants responded to the question 'why does the organization exist?', I noticed variation in how individuals answered. While Participants repeated themes and provided common responses, they seemed to express their individual perspective on the organization's purpose. For example, most acknowledged aspects of one or several of The Good, The Beautiful and The Heroic as espoused higher purposes for the organization, but they varied in how they emphasized or weighed the importance of each to the organization. These discrepancies are displayed in Figure 4.1, where graphs mapping each Participant's emphasis towards the different types of higher purpose in their interview serves as a practical and useful method to recognize this variation.

As well, many Participants explicitly stated their belief that other Participants would espouse a higher purpose that differed from their own. For example, Participant 3 noted "I think that more than likely there would be some common threads that come up . . . but I think everyone's experience is a little bit different" and Participant 9 added

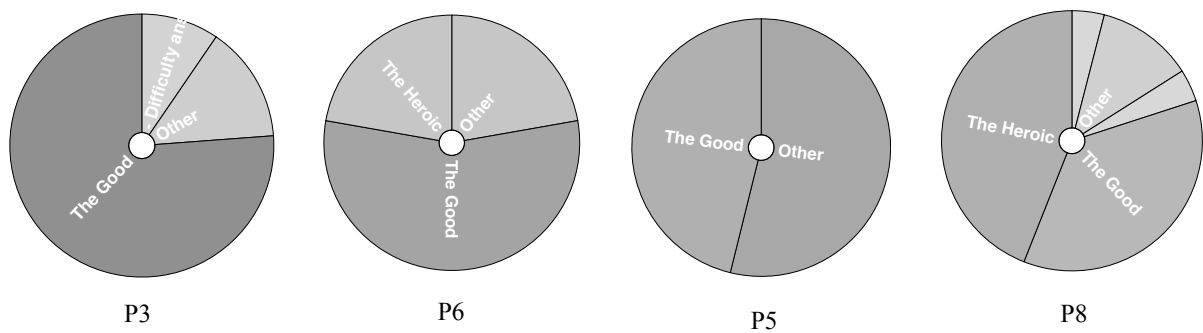


Figure 4.1 – Graphic representation of Participants’ responses to ‘why does the organization exist?,’ based on the number of coded references to each type of purpose. See Appendix F for all Participants ($n=13$).

“depending on which department you ask, I’m sure everyone would have different opinions.” Further, P1 said, “I can really only speak to [my department] because I work pretty closely with them, but the other side of the office, I have no idea.”

Ambiguity within Organizational Documents and Artifacts

This ambiguity continued to be prevalent when I triangulated these data with my observations of organizational documents and organizational artifacts. Specifically, I found no public or private documents with explicit statements of an organizational higher purpose, vision or mission. I found a purpose statement within the training manual for part-time, front-line staff, but an organizational leader (P11) acknowledged that that purpose was not organization-wide, saying, “[the owner] would never know that [Another organizational leader] probably doesn’t even know it off the top of [their] head.”

Further, on the organization’s public website, I found no comment on a higher purpose or organizational mission. While an organizational leader stated within an interview, “we get up every day to deliver the best live viewing experience in [our country for] sports,” I did not observe that espoused higher purpose explicitly written in

any other organizational documents. Moreover, through my observation of organizational artifacts, I found no additional support in clarifying the organization's higher purpose; while I found many value-laden artifacts in the organization's workplace, they were representative of various espoused higher purposes (e.g., jerseys and historical images celebrating the organizational history, images of fans and successful events celebrating the positive organizational impact on stakeholders, inspirational quotes displayed on office walls reinforcing the values of excellence and success).

Thus, in exploring the higher purpose of the case organization, many espoused sources of higher purpose were found among The Good (most notably), The Beautiful and The Heroic types, as outlined by Mackey and Sisodia (2013). It is also noteworthy that Participants did not espouse The True within interview data, nor did I find evidence of this type within organizational documents or organizational artifacts. Additionally, stakeholders espoused purposes that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) would not consider 'higher purposes' (i.e., profit-making opportunity, the organization's historical existence). Participants' beliefs about the organization's higher purpose were found to be variable however, and among Participants' responses, ambiguity existed that prohibited a common, unifying higher purpose.

Management of Higher Purpose and Core Values

After considering RQ1 and describing how organizational stakeholders define the organization's higher purpose, I will now address Research Question 2 (RQ2) to explore how organizational leaders strategically manage these espoused higher purposes. This description of the organizational leaders' management of higher purpose and core values was first developed from Participants' perspectives, who were asked 'how they

experience feelings of purpose and values during their work with the organization?’ and ‘how individual people within the organization enact those values?’ (see Appendix D for the Interview Guide). In addition, I examined organizational artifacts and documents to further observe how organizational leaders were managing higher purpose and core values. Below, I organize the findings according to Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-I Values Framework to present the management behaviour observed within these data.

Inactive Level

The first level of Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-I Values Framework is the *Inactive* level, where “organizational values are dormant or not used” (Kerwin, MacLean, & Bell-Laroche, 2011, p. 4). There were several elements of the organizational leaders’ behaviour that were indicative of this level, including a lack of formal communication towards higher purpose and core values and variable management of employees.

Leaders’ Lack of Formal Communication

Through Participants’ perspectives, organizational documents and organizational artifacts, it was found that leaders do not formally communicate an organizational higher purpose or core values. Participant 9 said, “it’s not something that we spend a lot of time talking about . . . in terms of what any of our meetings [are about] . . . I don’t think we spend a lot of time talking about values within the company or what we value.” Further, Participant 5 explained, “I think the communication could be better . . . I know a lot of things are said in management meetings or are told to directors that [don’t] necessarily funnel down to the people who are on the ground-level doing the work.”

This finding was also visible when I observed organizational documents and artifacts, as I found no statements defining the organization’s higher purpose or core

values. As stated previously, I found no documents that discussed organizational-wide higher purposes or unifying core values, nor was there evidence of formal training procedures utilized to integrate individuals into the organization's culture. In organizational workspaces, no artifacts were found to explicitly state an organizational higher purpose or core values. While I observed articulations of values that could be considered core values (e.g., a large poster with the words "Pride, Passion, Purpose"), I received no indication that these values exemplified core values and I did not receive any sense of their importance beyond aesthetic value. Additionally, these value-laden artifacts did not appear to be connected to a greater communication of an organizational higher purpose or core values (i.e., I did not see the words "Pride, Passion, Purpose" appearing anywhere else in the case site other than that single poster). Thus, through Participants' perspectives, organizational artifacts and documents, I found a lack of formal communication of higher purpose and core values by organizational leaders.

Leaders' Variable Management of Employees

Beyond the finding the leaders do not communicate a commonly shared higher purpose and core values, I found that participants described leaders' variable management of organizational employees as a barrier to a unified culture. When Participants were asked to discuss the lack of commonly shared higher purpose and core values, several referenced organizational leaders' variable management of employees, or discrepancies in how leaders treat employees, including examples of how leaders variably manage: *expectations, compensation, rewards, and workspaces*.

Expectations

First, several Participants spoke about how expectations held between groups of

organizational leaders and middle- to low-level employees differed. For example, Participants explained that leaders often articulate organizational values, but do not hold themselves accountable for behaving according to those values. Participant 5 explained that leaders emphasized “that we’re trying to do [good] in the community,” so they created a staff-volunteer event; however, “while it wasn’t mandatory, it was encouraged that you go And, there was one [leader] there.” Participant 5 further asked, “how can you expect us to go and buy-in to doing this when you’re not doing it as well?” With no perceived unified commitment to core values among all employees, the majority of Participants indicated it was difficult to consider values to be commonly shared.

Compensation Practices

Participants also perceived that leaders’ variable management of compensation practices is a barrier to a commonly shared higher purpose and core values. Participant 11 explains, “I think the management team . . . are paid quite well compared to their counterparts in other [organizations], whereas junior staff are probably somewhere less.” This discrepancy in compensation was thought to be prevent leaders from creating unity and an organizational ‘team-atmosphere’, as Participant 1 perceived some employees to be “all broke and . . . go home and eat frozen dinners,” while Participant 5 notes that organizational leaders “who are preaching [values such as] teamwork . . . are probably paid well, and go home at five o’clock, and maybe don’t have some of the same struggles.”

Reward Practices

Participants also spoke to how organizational leaders’ allocation of rewards contributes to employees’ ambiguity towards the organization’s higher purpose and core

values. Specifically, Participants suggested that leaders allocate rewards in accordance to particular organizational values more than others. Participant 7 perceived the most common example of this discrepancy concern “the revenue generation [departments] . . . [who] get infinite amount more benefits and lee-way than the others and they’re treated vastly different.” Leaders differentiating rewards begin with compensation practices; Participant 12 explained that an organizational leader told them, “you’re not tied to revenue [generation], so you don’t get paid as much.” Beyond compensation, Participants explained that leaders variably allocate other rewards, with Participant 5 suggesting that some employees receive “a paycheck for doing [their] jobs, but [others] getting a paycheck and getting lunches and getting a party on a Friday night.” Several Participants felt that such behaviours from leaders contributed to a cultural divide between employees.

Physical Segregation of Work Spaces

Finally, I observed leaders’ variable management of employees in physical artifacts within the organization’s office building. First, the revenue generation departments had amenities near their offices, such as a fruit basket and a water cooler, whereas I found no similar amenities within other departments. Participant 12 explained that this discrepancy creates a “huge dichotomy in the office . . . [where] you know your work is not valued [because] you’re being treated significantly differently.” I most notably observed this dichotomy in how the organizational workspace was arranged, as a hallway created a physical divide between the sales department and all other departments. Participants spoke to this divide as inhibiting a common culture from forming (e.g., Participant 9 perceived this hallway to have “segregated people”). Participants

acknowledged the impact of this physical divide, where Participant 1 referred to departments as existing on “the other side of the office.” When asked if people on the one side share common values with those on ‘the other side,’ Participant 13 claimed “I don’t know them well enough to say . . . because I have four interactions with each of them a year.”

Thus, when participants considered this physical segregation, they did so in addition to leadership behaviours that were perceived as creating a differentiation of expectations, compensation, rewards and amenities among employees, all of which create barriers to unifying employees with commonly shared values. When combined with leaders’ lack of communication towards a common higher purpose and core values, Participants suggested that these particular leadership behaviours contribute to the existing ambiguity they experience towards a common higher purpose and core values.

Intuitive Level

The second level of Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-I Values Framework is the *Intuitive* level, where “organizational values are shared and experienced at the individual level and the communication of organizational values is leader dependent” (Kerwin et al., 2011, p. 4). Despite the lack of formal communication and Participants’ divided perspectives towards higher purpose and core values, they acknowledged that they experience higher purpose and core values within the organization. As well, Participants explained that the organizational values they experience are typically adopted based upon organizational leaders’ communication.

Individual’s Experience of Organizational Values

In interviews, Participants indeed indicated that they experience core values while

working within the organization. Participants were asked to explain common values of the organization, or ‘guiding principles’ about how to behave within the culture (see Appendix D for Interview Guide), and each Participant explained values that they believe are ‘organizational values,’ including: excellence, teamwork, being competitive and being passionate about one’s work (see Table 4.1 for examples of commonly referenced organizational values, and Appendix G for the full list of organizational values coded from interviews). Participants suggested that the values they spoke to define the organizations culture; when speaking about their perceived organizational values, Participant 8 said, “I feel the majority of people would strongly agree with and believe in [those values as] our way . . . how we do things.”

Organizational Value	<i>Participants who referenced (n=13)</i>
Excellence	10
Teamwork, unity	8
Competition, ‘Being the Best’	7
Passion for work	6
Generate revenue	5
Strong work ethic	5
Employee relationships, beyond just co-workers	4
Creating amazing fan experiences	4

Table 4.1 – Commonly referenced organizational values by interview participants (see Appendix G for full list of organizational values coded from interviews)

Participants suggested that individuals experience organizational values; however, their depiction of what the organization’s core values are varied. For example, in Table 4.1, no single organizational values existed that all participants ($n=13$) referenced, and less than half of all Participants referenced the majority of the organizational values presented in interviews.

Leader-Dependent Communication of Values

When Participants were asked to consider the source of the core values they experience, the majority explained that organizational leaders are the source of communicating the organization's core values. Participant 5 noted that core values are "preached from the top-down," to which Participant 6 agreed, thinking that organizational values begin "at the top and kind of filtering its way down." Participants explained that organizational leaders use several strategies to communicate organizational values, including 'pep talks,' leading by example, casual communication, goal setting and defining employee expectations.

'Pep Talks'

Participants explained that leaders verbally reinforce organizational values in meetings through speeches or 'pep talks.' Participant 8 explained how leaders host "weekly staff meetings to keep everyone informed," where Participant 11 offered that leaders will give "speeches that [focus] on certain aspects [of the business] and . . . always end with a message." Participant 1 furthered that those messages serve as "reinforcing statements about what our values are and what [a leader] sees our values as," and Participant 8 added that they are a method of "making sure that we're all a united force going out there." Participants generally suggested that this strategy was effective in communicating organizational values, with Participant 1 claiming, "if you want everyone to be on the same page, tell them what you think that attitude should be."

Leading by Example

Several participants suggested that leaders often 'lead-by-example' and behave in a way that modeled organizational values. Participant 5 explained, "they do their best to

model that behaviour They don't just talk about it." Participant 3 suggested, "how do you get someone to do something? Do it yourself I think that goes a long way." As an example, several participants spoke about how leaders will contribute to small-scale tasks at the organization's events; Participant 4 said that organizational leaders still do the "small things at the stadium on a game day, like cleaning, putting out promotional material Any task that any of [our staff] would be doing, the management is doing it as well." Further, Participant 13 said, "I always see [a leader] cleaning tables beside an intern. I think that's an awesome thing to see . . . speaks volumes."

Casual Communication

Participants provided examples of casual leader-employee interactions and conversations that reinforced organizational values. When asked to explain leadership behaviour that reinforces values, Participant 6 suggest that "it's all verbal," where Participant 12 stated that organizational values are "coming straight from [the leader's] mouth." For example, Participant 13 described an interaction in their job interview where an organizational leader "ranted" about the organization's values. Also, Participant 3 explained that receiving verbal feedback from organizational leaders, such as, "these are good, these are all very good. How do we take it to the next level?" often guides employees' behaviour positively toward the leader's envisioned direction.

Goal Setting

Participants also spoke about leaders' use of goal setting as a strategy to guide employees' behaviour. For example, Participant 6 explained that leaders "create competitions . . . [and define] goals and objectives that need to be hit." Further, leaders reward goal achievement, given Participant 2's description of an occasion when "we hit a

big [sales] goal, we basically shut down the office one afternoon, went golfing, had some drinks Work hard and you'll be rewarded." I observed artifacts of this goal setting strategy in the organization's work place; for example, descriptions of defined departmental goals, objectives and plans to achieve those goals were written upon several hung whiteboards outside offices. In the sales department, whiteboards displayed sales goals, and displayed employees' names who had achieved the highest sales figures (i.e., names of those whom had contributed the most to those goals). As Participant 2 explained, the whiteboards serve as a means to define "where we are, where we need to be, and where we're expected to be."

Expectations

As a final leadership-dependent communication of core values, participants explained that leaders often set behavioural expectations, and provided examples of leader-employee interactions that reinforced leaders' expectations. As a first example, Participant 11 noted a leader saying "you have to win You win, because that's what your expected of," whereas Participant 2 shared that leaders have a general sentiment of "this is where we expect to be . . . no excuses why we wouldn't be there, so make that happen." Participant 4 explained, "in meetings . . . they're always discussing it. It's the, 'this is what we expect and [we] don't expect anything less.'" Leaders reinforce core values through these expectations by holding employees accountable if and when they do not uphold them; for example, Participant 5 explained, "you don't have an opportunity to slip up, [because] you're criticized if you do."

Participant 9 suggested that leaders' prominent verbal communication of expectations has changed their MBV approach from being a reinforcement of core values

to being an ‘enforcement of expectations.’ This Participant further explained that core values “would have to be more inclusive, in the sense that everyone was involved in setting what these common values are.” When leaders enforced expectations from the ‘top-down,’ and when they hold employees accountable for upholding them, Participant 9 believed that such actions change how employees perceive the organization’s values. Participant 9 claimed, “a value is more input from the actual staff . . . it’s a common thing Otherwise, I don’t think those are common values. I think those are expectations.”

Overall, I found from these data that Participants perceive leaders to primarily communicate the values that exist within the organization from ‘the top-down’ through strategies such as ‘pep talks,’ ‘leading by example’ behaviour, casual conversations, goal setting and leaders’ communication of expectations.

Institutional Level

The third level of Bell-Laroche et al.’s 4-I Values Framework is the *Institutional* level, where “organizational values are embedded, system-wide, and are evident in policies, practices and procedures within the [organization]” (Kerwin et al., 2011, p. 4). While it was found that the majority of Participants’ perceptions were relevant to the *Inactive* and *Intuitive* levels, they did present examples of organizational practices and programs that may indicate that core values are institutionally embedded within the case organization. While Participants mentioned leaders’ inequitable behaviours regarding compensation and reward practices as those behaviours that may inhibit an alignment of higher purpose and core values, they also acknowledged that these rewards reinforce specific organizational values. As well, Participants recognized hiring procedures as a method by which leaders build and maintain the organization’s culture. Last, Participants

perceived specific organizationally developed programs as potentially connected to an organizational higher purpose. While infrequent, Participants did provide examples representative of an *Institutional* level of MBV.

Compensation and Reward Practices

Several Participants cited examples of organizational compensation and reward practices that they believed demonstrated embedded core values; however, they acknowledged that leaders used such practices to reinforce only specific core values, most of which were related to revenue generation. Participants whose duties involved sales recognized that leaders would create competitions and incentive programs to reinforce the pursuit of revenue. Participant 2 explained, “if you’ve had a good week . . . [leaders will] recognize it Whether it be a hundred bucks at the end of the week, or . . . we just finished a [sales competition] last week that was a couple weeks [of work] for your team and [the reward] was a dinner out.”

Participants recognized that such leader practices reinforce the importance of particular organizational values and in turn, devalue other organizational values. As discussed previously, Participants recognized that employees who did not contribute to revenue generation goals do not receive the same compensation and rewards. When asked if leaders value some employees’ work over others, Participant 12 responded, “yes, the ones that are tied to revenue,” suggesting that leaders reinforce this value through their allocation of “anything from metaphorical gold stars, to what they get paid.” While Participants did not observe compensation and reward practices to encourage all core values, examples of leaders providing incentives for sales staff suggest that they engage

in institutionally based practices that reward employees' engagement with revenue generating behaviour.

Hiring Practices

Participants acknowledged that how leaders hire employees represents another institutionalized practice that influences organizational culture. As Participant 5 explained, "step one to making sure that you have a staff that feel unified and have those common values is learning those things before you hire people." Several participants suggested that leaders manage particular values through their hiring; specifically, leaders hire those who have a value for competition. One organizational leader (P11), explained that "there's a competitive nature associated with a sports team," so hiring "sport-minded" people helps maintain that competitive value. This leader further said, "I think the like-mindedness certainly creates a culture by itself . . . because you're not trying to morph minds. Those minds are already aligned." When Participant 9 reflected on why they were hired, they said, "I'm sure one of the reasons [my leader] brought me on was because [they] knew I would be someone who would gel with [their] personality."

In contrast to this apparent institutionalized hiring practice, I observed no references to a hiring policy or any recommendations specific to hiring practices within organizational documents. Participants, when explaining hiring practices, always referenced leaders' desire to hire competitive, 'sport-minded' individuals. Thus, while leaders may not embed all core values in hiring practices, Participants' perceptions of leaders hiring 'competitive' people serves as an example of a core value embedded within an institutionalized leadership practice.

Organizational Programs

Similar to earlier depictions of compensation, reward and hiring practices, Participants described specific organizationally developed programs that they perceived have an embedded core value. First, Participants recognized that organizational leaders enact the value of ‘teamwork’ by hosting group outings; Participant 7 described how these outings “bring all the team together . . . maybe not inside, but outside of work, to try to build [the team].” As an example, Participants spoke about how organizational leaders will pay for employees to attend an away-game for the organization’s team, and host a party for staff to eat and drink together before going to watch the game. Participant 11 suggested that this type of outing also reinforced the core value related to an employee’s passion for the organization, claiming that cheering on the organization’s team is “fueling your passion for the organization and the team.”

Leaders also created programs to reinforce the espoused higher purpose of giving back to the community. For example, Participant 3 spoke of how leaders implemented “monthly or bi-monthly community outreach initiatives” where employees have the opportunity to volunteer at a community event. On the organization’s website, I found explanations of several charitable initiatives that engage stakeholders (e.g., customers, partners, community members), including donation-based programs based upon the team’s on-field performance, which exemplify the organization’s value of giving back to the community. While these organizational programs did not reinforce all core values, they combine with examples of compensation, reward and hiring practices as occasional examples of specific organizational values being embedded in leaders’ management practices.

Inspirational Level

The fourth and final level of Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework is the *Inspirational* level, where “organizational values are embedded, system-wide, and are being leveraged intentionally as strategic communications tools to engage and inspire members to achieve a common goal” (Kerwin et al., 2011, p. 4). From an analysis of Participant interview data and from observations of organizational artifacts and documents, I found no evidence of organizational leaders' intention to leverage core values. In support, Participant 11, an organizational leader, responded to the question ‘to what extent are organizational leaders intentionally managing core values to achieve objectives?’ (see Appendix D for Interview Guide) by suggesting, “I think [leaders] are cognizant of [values] Beyond that... I don't know I don't think intentionally.”

Another organizational leader (P10), expanded on Participant 11's thinking by explaining that in leadership meetings, leaders rarely discuss culture management and values management, and they do not always discuss the “bigger picture.” This leader further claimed that the examples of managing values described above, (e.g., incentive programs), are typically reactions to underachievement in a response to improve performance. For example, Participant 10 said, “[leaders] don't start a contest or start an incentive [program] when [sales] are going good,” explaining that these incentive programs are typically intended to provide employees with extra motivation when responding to poor sales' results.

Participant 10's depiction of “reactionary” culture management contrasts the leaders' intentional leveraging of core values that Bell-Laroche et al. (2013) characterize as central to the *Inspirational* level of MBV. Upon observing organizational documents

and artifacts, I did not find any evidence that organizational leaders utilize core values as a communications tool to inspire and engage stakeholders, which corroborates Participants' perceptions of intentional values management. Thus, no evidence was found in the case site that suggests organizational leaders manage core values at an *Inspirational* level.

Current Cultural Environment

Many Participants explained the impact the organization's current cultural environment has on them and on their work when I asked them to answer questions about the presence of higher purpose and leaders' management of core values in the case site. This is noteworthy, given I did not prompt them to do so (i.e., the influence of higher purpose and leaders' management by values on stakeholders was not a specified area of inquiry within this study). This dialogue organically emerged in my discussions with Participants, and as such, I found that Participants' experiences with the organization were significantly influenced by their perception of the organization's higher purpose and leaders' management of core. Thus, to conclude this chapter, I will outline the various ways Participants perceive the organization's current cultural environment to have influenced them.

Passion for Organization

To begin, several Participants recognized that a connection to their perceived organizational higher purpose and core values inspires feelings of passion and pride towards their work. Participant 1 explained, "everyone here knows that we don't make as much as we could be making somewhere else in our respective field . . . [so, leaders] try to instill this idea in you that you're doing this because it's fun and because you love it."

Participants' experiences illustrated this love for their jobs, where Participant 7 stated, "each of the departments take pride in what they do" and where Participant 13 exclaimed, "this is the best job I've ever had . . . I f*cking love it." In this way, Participants perceived that the presence of higher purpose and core values—even if all stakeholders did not commonly share the same purpose or values—created a personal connection with the organization that positively influenced participants' engagement with the organization.

Unification of Culture on 'Game Days'

While I found that Participants' perceived higher purpose and core values were often ambiguous and segregated, they generally indicated that specific circumstances occur where employees unified around commonly shared core values. For example, many Participants said they experienced a unified sense of higher purpose and core values specifically on those days organizational events are held (i.e., 'game days'). Participant 1 said, "it kind of all comes together on game day . . . Even though I don't work with [another employee] ever, on game day, suddenly I have something to do with him . . . Suddenly, we have a common goal." Further, Participant 5 said, "when we all show up for game day, we all understand why we're there and I think we all enjoy game day enough to buy-in," whereas Participant 13 added that on game days, "that's when I feel everyone is of the same mindset . . . We're part of one bigger team."

Participants suggested that organizational leaders' management of values appears most strongly on game days, and helps inspire a unified culture. For example, Participant 5 explained that leaders host staff meetings before the start of an event, in which they verbalize connections to a higher purpose, saying phrases such as, "it's going to be a

great day, we're going to win, it'll be a great show, we're going to do all these things for the fans." As Participant 4 previously explained, leaders also model behaviours that align with core organizational values on game day, such as them doing "small things at the stadium on a game day, like cleaning, putting out promotional material. . . . Any task that any of [our staff] would be doing, the management is doing it as well."

One organizational leader (P10), recognized the impact of this unified culture on organizational performance, claiming that "the stuff this staff has pulled off [on game days] over the years is remarkable It's almost super human what a group of people can do." Thus, while I did not observe the organization's higher purpose and core values as universally aligned, leaders and employees thought game days was an example when leaders utilized an espoused higher purpose and core values to unite and align employees around the organization's culture, such that organizational performance may be improved.

Perceived Hierarchy

In contrast to a unified cultural environment, participants perceived that the variable management of stakeholders—as previously discussed—created an organizational hierarchy. When Participants were asked why they believed core values were not commonly shared throughout the organization, Participant 6 explained, "the hierarchy is very evident The managers and then the people who work on a lower level, I think there's a very significant discrepancy between the two groups of people." Participant 4 explained this hierarchy using the organization's team as a metaphor, saying:

the head coach says, 'this is what I want you do' to his coaches and his players, and they do it or they don't fit in to the scheme. There's no, 'oh, can we do it this way?' I don't think there's room for that athletically and I think the organization mirrors that.

Further, Participant 3 said, "at times, people follow leadership, management, direction, because they have to. Because that's the structure."

Participants suggested that employees perceive this hierarchy as creating a different set of expectations among employees, a lack of transparency between leaders and employees, and often prevents staff from voicing their needs and ideas. However, Participants suggested that the most prominent implication of this hierarchy was their feeling that one's work is not valued. For example, Participant 5 explained, "I feel like [middle- to low-level staff] are coming to work and are not feeling valued or not feel like they're contributing because [they're] not being empowered to make those decisions that the people at the top have to make," whereas Participant 11, an organizational leader, spoke further to the impact of a hierarchy:

the management team is almost half the size of the office, so that creates a sense of, 'oh, well, if you're not part of this unique group . . . this special club, that you're not as valued as you could be . . . Maybe it is the competitive [metaphor] of, well, you're a third stringer . . . you shouldn't be valued as much . . . I think there's a big opportunity to make sure that the third stringer is important. And it feels that way . . . and they feel important.

In that way, Participants perceived the organization's hierarchy as a barrier for middle- to low-level employees to feel valued as part of the organization's culture and feel that they are contributing to the organization's higher purpose.

Inauthenticity

As a final characteristic of the organization's current cultural environment, Participants explained that organizational leaders' lack of formal communication of a higher purpose and core values fostered their perception of organizational leaders' inauthentic behaviour. Participant 6 suggested that "what we put out to the rest of the world and what we actually are internally are vastly different . . . I think there's a lot of 'about face' in terms of presentation of what we are . . . in reality to what we are to everybody externally." Several Participants referred to situations where organizational leaders did not communicate with all stakeholders the values that guided their decision making. For example, Participant 10 referred to the existence of leaders' potential "hidden agendas" related to organizational programs (i.e., community initiatives), where they tell employees that "community ultimately exist as a way to market the team and sell tickets, and not . . . 'our community department is here to connect with youth and make impactful change.'"

Without organizational leaders explicitly communicating the core values that direct decision-making, Participants suggested that what organizational leaders do communicate may be understood as inauthentic. Thus, while organizational leaders' current management of higher purpose and core values was found to have inspired a passion for the organization and created a unified culture among employees in particular circumstances, the ambiguous and varied understanding among employees towards the

organization's higher purpose and core values manifests perceptions of a hierarchy of preferred employees (versus others) and of leaders' inauthentic behaviour.

Conclusion

In summary, these data presented address the current study's research questions by illuminating the higher purpose espoused by organizational stakeholders and describing the current ways in which leaders strategically managed higher purpose. First, stakeholders espoused higher purposes for the organization, including The Good, The Beautiful and the Heroic; however, Participants' espoused higher purposes were found to vary, with each Participant espousing their individual perception of 'why the organization exists.' Organizational leaders were also observably cognizant of the organization's higher purpose and core values, and were depicted to have strategically utilized higher purpose and core values to influence employees' performance on certain occasions. Leaders were found to communicate higher purpose and core values informally and manage them intuitively, with higher purpose and core values yet to be embedded into organizational systems or intentionally leveraged to engage and inspire organizational stakeholders. While leaders' management of values has developed a cultural environment that successfully fosters passionate employees and a unified culture on certain occasions, leaders' MBV has also fostered Participants' negative feelings regarding the existence of a hierarchy and their perception of an inauthentic organizational culture.

This case description serves as a platform for this study's next chapter, in which I consider how scholars and practitioners can utilize the in-depth findings of this case site to further understand how higher purpose can exist within a professional sport organization and how leaders may strategically utilize higher purpose to improve

organizational performance and to increase the organization's beneficial contributions to individuals and communities.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I synthesize the concepts and understanding described in the previous chapters to create a discussion that generates the ‘message’ of this research study (Savin-
Baden & Major, 2013). To begin, I connect the study’s findings to the relevant literature towards higher purpose and organizational management, and in so doing, I illustrate the significance of this research’s findings to that dialogue. I then utilize those significant insights to discuss how the findings of this research may aid this organization’s leaders in making quality improvements to their organization. Through this discussion, I may articulate the significance of this research project and the benefits of this research to leaders of the case organization and to future sport management scholars.

Connections to Relevant Literature

Bridging the findings with the relevant literature discussed previously allows me to fully develop an understanding gained from this case study. Given that I used Mackey and Sisodia’s (2013) four-types of higher purpose typology and Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-Is Values Framework to analyze these data, I make connections with these frameworks and other relevant literature to explain ‘what the findings mean.’ This discussion begins by connecting the espoused higher purposes found in the case site with literature, to explore how these current findings can generally inform our understanding of the higher purpose of this professional sport organizations. From there, the leaders’ management of higher purpose in the case site is related to relevant literature to understand how their behaviour can further develop an understanding of how these leaders strategically utilize higher purpose. Through this dialogue, I generate the key

insights of this research study and utilize these insights to form recommendations for future management practice and research.

Presence of Higher Purpose

In response to Research Question 1 (RQ1), I first explore how the espoused higher purpose observed in the case site connects with the sport management literature that discusses the purpose of sport in society. Participants' ambiguity towards the organization's higher purpose directly relates to sport management scholars' lack of clarity towards the higher purpose of sport organizations. Participants most commonly espoused The Good as a type of higher purpose, a finding that generally aligns with what sport scholars believe sport organizations contribute to society. While the variation of espoused higher purposes by stakeholders perpetuates this ambiguity, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) also suggest that stakeholders' embodiment of multiple higher purposes could be a strategic advantage for organizational leaders. Further, it is important to recognize Participants' espousing of the (non-higher) purpose of revenue generation within the case site, which is a purpose scholars duly recognize as a prevalent one throughout the industry. Thus, relevant literature adds depth to the research's findings and enables me to develop my observations of higher purpose in the case organization toward useful insights.

Ambiguity towards Sport's Higher Purpose

The ambiguity I observed amongst stakeholders towards the case organization's higher purpose directly connects with a scholarly ambiguity regarding a general purpose of commercial sport organizations (Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007). In the case organization, Participants had difficulty responding to the question, 'why does this

organization exist?,' with Participant 9 even acknowledging that they thought "everybody would struggle with that question." Further, from my observations of public and private organizational documents (e.g., the organization's website, images in the organization's work place), I found no explicit statements existing which defined an organizational higher purpose. Participants also acknowledged their belief that various stakeholders would understand the organization's higher purpose differently, with Participant 3 claiming "I think everyone's experience is a little bit different" and Participant 9 agreeing, stating "I'm sure everyone would have different opinions."

Similar to Participants' perspectives, Zeigler (2007) reflected about sport management research and practice, "what are we really promoting, and do we know why we are doing it? I do not have a comprehensive answer" (p. 298). Scholars have studied the benefit of sport from different perspectives, including the creation of excitement and joy (Eastman & Riggs, 1994), the strengthening of an individual's social network (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001), and the unifying of communities (Jarvie, 2006); however, similar to Participants, scholars have yet to unify a definition of why sport organizations exist. The existence of varying perspectives and otherwise lack of dialogue about sport organization's higher purpose demonstrates a potential global ambiguity towards this topic.

The Good

From a review of the sport management literature, scholars most often characterize sport organizations' higher purpose by their beneficial contributions to stakeholders' quality of life, defined by Mackey and Sisodia (2013) as 'The Good.' In this current study, Participants most commonly espoused this type of higher purpose,

suggesting that the organization's existence can be defined by its creation of entertainment and positive experiences, fostering of individual and community identity, inspiration of community pride and encouraging personal relationships. Further, organizational leaders demonstrated 'The Good' through videos published on their website in which they celebrated the organization's work to unify their community and within newspaper interviews where leaders spoke to attempts to create amazing entertainment experiences.

Furthermore, sport management scholars speak to 'The Good' as the most pervasive type of higher purpose relevant to sport organizations. Newman (2014) suggests that sport organizations were initially created to foster The Good, claiming community leaders originally and principally "thought of sport as a feature of the public good" (p. 605) and that sport "made for a healthier, more disciplined, and ultimately better society" (p. 605). In support of 'The Good,' scholars discuss the benefits of professional sport on both individuals and communities (Eastman & Riggs, 1994; Jarvie, 2006; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001), all of which reflect improvements to individuals' quality of life.

Participants' common reference to the organization's beneficial contribution to individuals and communities reflects Newman's (2014) similar perspective; that sport was created to serve the public good. The narrative that sport positively contributes to quality of life may have historical roots dating back millennia, with ancient Olympiad being credited as unifying Greek states (Spivey, 2004) and Roman gladiatorial spectacles being celebrated for entertaining and engaging thousands of citizens (Bomgardner, 2000). Societal leaders have continued to position sport as a service to the public good into the

21st Century, considering Nelson Mandela's claims about sport's value to society and the modern Olympic movement's advocacy for sport as a "service [to] the harmonious development of humankind" (International Olympic Committee, 2016, p. 11) as specific examples.

The perpetuation of this narrative throughout Western civilization's history may explain why stakeholders of the case organization and sport researchers both emphasize a sport organization's beneficial service to individuals and communities. The primacy of The Good as an espoused organizational higher purpose, the scholarly emphasis on sport's beneficial contributions, and the historical narrative that sport contributes to quality of life together suggest that this particular type of higher purpose represents the predominant higher purpose for sport organizations.

Integrating Other Higher Purposes

Stakeholders also espoused other higher purposes, which Mackey and Sisodia (2013) suggest may represent a healthy development for an organization. While Participants espoused The Good as the predominant higher purpose in the case organization, through an analysis of Participant interviews and an observation of organizational artifacts and documents, The Beautiful and The Heroic were also found to be espoused organizational higher purposes. First, 'The Beautiful' was observed through Participants' expression of the organization's pursuit of excellence, demonstrated by Participant 4 who explained "our goal, theoretically, is to win championships" (P4) and an organizational artifact upon which the phrase, "Being the best. There is no other reason to play" was written. Second, 'The Heroic' was visible through the organization's dedication to 'giving back to the community' through charitable programs and using their

team's players as positive role models, and with the owner's philanthropic behaviour in keeping the organization financially viable "to make sure that [the organization is] doing things that make the city great" (P8).

While Participants' additional espoused higher purposes create an overall variation of higher organizational purposes, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) acknowledge that leaders and stakeholders embodying multiple higher purposes can actually be advantageous to an organization and explain:

many businesses straddle multiple purpose Ultimately, all four [types of higher purpose] are connected. When something is Good, it is also True, Beautiful, and Heroic in its own specific ways There is always unity within the diversity if our minds are able to see the integration (p. 64).

In this way, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) suggest that an organization is capable of espousing and pursuing multiple higher purposes, and in so doing, organizational leaders may develop a more meaningful process by which organizational members may fully realize the organization's predominant higher purpose. For example, within the case organization, an organizational leader stated in a newspaper interview, "we get up every day to deliver the best live viewing experience in [our country for] sports." Here, the organizational leader appears to recognize that the organization's creation of positive experiences (i.e., representing The Good) is realized through integrating pursuits of excellence and 'being the best' (i.e., both representing The Beautiful).

While Participants espousing The Beautiful and The Heroic was found to contribute to their sense of ambiguity toward the higher purpose of the sport organization, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) suggest that the integrated pursuit of multiple higher

purposes may also be a method for an organization to generate the most beneficial contribution to stakeholders. Thus, it is important to consider Participants' perception of both The Beautiful and The Heroic as existing higher purposes of the case organization, which may be recognized as individual definitions of 'why the organization exists,' or which may serve as part of an integrated organizational pursuit towards the predominant organizational higher purpose (i.e., The Good).

Threat of Existing (Non-higher) Purposes

Beyond finding that The Good, The Beautiful and The Heroic types of higher purposes were espoused in the current case organization, Participants' and scholars' insights alike suggest that sport stakeholders perceive other purposes for sport organizations not considered as 'higher purposes.' Most notably in this case study, Participants espoused a purpose of for-profit revenue generation, where Participant 11 suggested that the organization "exists because there's a business opportunity to make money off a professional sport franchise and monetize that experience." As Mackey and Sisodia (2013) do not consider profit as fitting within the 4-types of higher purpose, this purpose as espoused by Participants was not considered a 'higher purpose.'

Sport management scholars acknowledge that both researchers and practitioners possess a prevalent perception of non-higher purposes for sport. For example, Newman (2014) explains that many scholars and practitioners both assume sport to exist "principally as a commercial activity" (p. 604) where many prioritize efforts towards maximizing such profits over efforts towards contributing value to stakeholders. Further, Frisby (2005) comments, "whereas I am not rejecting growth or profit as possible

outcomes of practice and research, I see the broadening or balancing of the agenda as a much needed and healthy development in our field” (p. 6).

Thus, both sport management scholars and the Participants within this case site recognize profit as an espoused sport organizational purpose. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) recognize that leaders commonly aspire to profit-maximization in commercial organizations (e.g., professional sport) however, they caution against leaders developing profit as the espoused organizational purpose, claiming such a purpose elevates “the narrow, self-serving interests of the few over the well-being of the many” (p. 21). Participants also referenced the potentially harmful nature of this particular non-higher purpose, suggesting that organizational leaders were sacrificing the contributory mission of the organization’s community programs to instead utilize the programs to market the organization and thereby generate sales. Therefore, in this sport organization, focusing efforts towards a non-higher purpose may detract from the beneficial contributions the organization can otherwise create for stakeholders that emerge from the pursuit of higher purposes representative of The Good, The Beautiful and The Heroic.

Higher Purpose in the Sport Organization

Overall, the observed presence of higher purpose types within the case organization aligns and connect with many scholarly concepts found within relevant literature, including: an ambiguity towards the higher purpose of sport organizations (Newman, 2014; Zeigler, 2007), The Good being the predominant source of higher purpose for a sport organization (Eastman & Riggs, 1994; Jarvie, 2006; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001), other sources of higher purpose integrating to be part of the organization’s higher purpose (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013), and non-higher purposes

potentially threatening the organization's pursuit of their higher purpose (Frisby, 2005; Newman, 2014). As such, these findings within the case organization strongly reflect the existing conceptual understanding of the higher purpose of sport organizations as currently outlined within the sport management literature. Given this strong reflection, the need for both further research and development of industry practice is reinforced, as the findings indicate that while higher purpose is present within this sport organization, stakeholders have yet to both clearly define or explicitly state a higher purpose. Opportunities for this organization's leaders to engage in such development will be discussed later in this chapter and recommendations for future research to further stimulate such development will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Management of Higher Purpose and Core Values

To address Research Question 2 (RQ2), I discuss how organizational leaders strategically utilized higher purpose through their management of core values in the current case organization. Participants also expressed ambiguity towards an organizational higher purpose through their divided perceptions of organizational core values; that is, while Participants experienced core values, they did not observe them as commonly shared or aligned among all stakeholders. As Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) suggest, such a lack of alignment negates the positive influence that core values—and in turn, higher purpose—can have on organizational performance. With stakeholders of the case organization depending on organizational leaders to communicate core values, scholars suggest that leaders institutionalizing core values into organizational practices will enable such leaders to leverage higher purpose to align stakeholders and positively influence organizational performance (Barrett, 2014; Mackey & Sisodia, 2013).

Connecting organizational leaders' practices observed in the case organization to relevant literature allows for an understanding of how these leaders managed higher purpose and generates insights for recommendations for improved practice.

Managing Sport's 'Inherent Values'

Organizational leaders exhibited a unique Management by Values (MBV) level within Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework, which Participants suggest is due to the unique sport context existing within the organization. To begin, the findings of this research suggest that organizational leaders' management practices are representative of both the Inactive and the Intuitive levels of MBV. First, Participants' experience of a lack of commonly shared values was indicative of an Inactive level, while their individual experience being dependent upon leaders to communicate values was suggestive of an Intuitive level.

Organizational leaders' management practice were not found to be reflective of the third, Institutional level, as while examples existed of embedded values in organizational practices, leaders' lack of explicit communication about the organization's core values indicated that these values had yet to become institutionalized. Furthermore, Participants did not perceive organizational leaders to be intentionally leveraging core values at the Inspirational level and I did not observe Participants to be inspired or engaged specifically by the organization's core values.

From the findings, organizational leaders' MBV may exemplify a middling stage between the first and second level of the 4-I Values Framework; it was evident that Participants experienced core values that organizational leaders communicate (Intuitive level) however, participants did not commonly share core values (Inactive level). From

this finding, Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework may be expanded to include the '*Indefinite*' level, a middling stage of MBV representative of Participants' experience of shared core values, but in which core values are perceived as ambiguous, intangible and not commonly shared (See Figure 5.1 for inclusion of the *Indefinite* level of MBV among Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) original 4-I Values Framework).

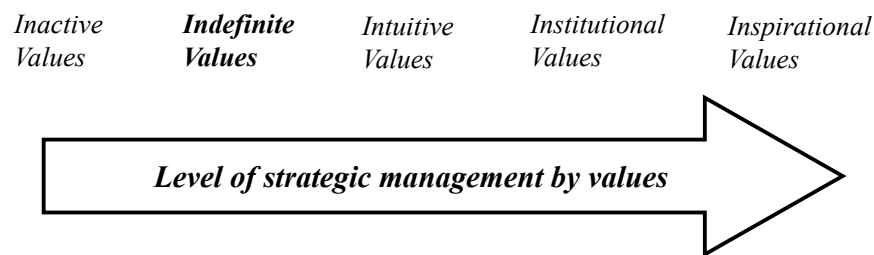


Figure 5.1 – 5-I Values Framework, adapted from Bell-Laroche, Maclean, Thibault, & Wolfe's (2014) 4-I Values Framework, with inclusion of the Indefinite level of MBV.

Participants' depiction of a sport organization's unique cultural environment provides insight as to why organizational stakeholders experienced core values, but did not unify around the experiences of these values. Several participants suggested that the context of a sport organization inherently fosters particular values; Participant 11, an organizational leader, explained that "there's a competitive nature associated with a sports team," which ultimately connects with these "sport-minded" values. The presence of these 'inherent values' within the sport context possibly explain Participants' experience of the most commonly espoused core values for the organization as including: excellence, teamwork, competition and passion (see Appendix G), values commonly associated with sport.

Participants' assumption of 'inherent values' of a sport organization may possibly contribute to the finding that they lacked commonly shared values, as some Participants acknowledged that they do not inherently connect with these 'sport values.' Participant 4 explained:

I think that because it's a sports team, there's a definite competitive sense . . . and I'm not that person I'm just not competitive I didn't play sports and watch sports for this many years of my life I don't have that I struggle with it sometimes Sometimes you feel like you don't fit in.

Participant 11 also recognized that when organizational leaders provide incentives and reward employees for behaviour aligned with the values of competition and 'being the best,' they are not engaged, claiming that for them, "it's not, why do we want to win? Its why are we playing?" While organizational leaders may assume that all stakeholders share these core values in a sport context, some Participants' experiences suggest that not all inherently espouse nor value these 'sport values.'

Thus, the sport organizational context may foster an environment where stakeholders may experience values (i.e., Intuitive level), but are not all are necessarily commonly shared (i.e., Inactive level). Organizational leaders' possible assumption that those within a sport context inherently share all core values could account for their lack of formal communication of these core values. In turn, leaders' lack of communication towards core values could then further contribute to Participants' ambiguity towards these core values. This cycle may contribute to creating an organizational culture where employees deduce and espouse their own higher purpose and core values, but do not necessarily unify with others in their beliefs (i.e., an Indefinite level of MBV).

Alignment of Core Values

Participants explicitly acknowledged that not all employees commonly shared organizational core values; and occasionally, leaders' management of core values even contributed to a divide between stakeholders. I observed a lack of formal communication towards the core values of the organization, given that I found no organizational documents or artifacts that explicitly stated core values. Further, Participant 9 explained that values are "not something that we spend a lot of time talking about . . . in terms of what any of our meetings [are about] . . . I don't think we spend a lot of time talking about values within the company or what we value." Beyond a lack of communication, Participants suggested that organizational leaders' management of core values was divisive to employees, given their varied expectations towards commitment to values, discrepancies in compensation and rewards for upholding values and a physical segregation of their workspace, all of which were perceived as factors that contribute to a cultural environment where core values serve to divide employees instead of uniting them.

Scholars suggest that this level of management by values can limit organizational performance and that there are potentially profound benefits to leaders growing their strategic management of values. Barrett (2014) suggests that employees' ambiguity or division towards core values inhibits organizational performance, as employee engagement suffers and friction develops within the organization's culture. In contrast, Gallup's (2010) research demonstrated that organizations where employees are engaged experienced an earnings per share growth rate nearly four times greater than comparable organizations with low employee engagement. Further, Mann and Harter (2016)

acknowledged that most organizations do not have engaged employees, with 68 percent of employees in the U.S. being found to not be engaged; thus, organizational leaders are presented a significant opportunity to gain a competitive advantage by engaging employees through a strategic management of core values.

Therefore, such scholars may suggest that this organization's leaders have an opportunity to increase organizational performance by engaging and unifying their employees through an alignment of core values. Improving their formal communication of core values and unifying employees through a management of core values could prevent employee engagement and cultural entropy from inhibiting organizational performance and foster the performance benefits that result from heightened employee engagement. Thus, organizational leaders in this case organization may have an opportunity to improve organizational performance by strategically utilizing core values to unify their organizational culture and align the values of their employees.

Strategic Management of Core Values

Bridging the current leadership practices observed within the case organization with best practices from management scholarship may provide further insight toward leadership practices that could enable leaders to align and strategically utilize core values. In the case description, Participants acknowledged that leaders communicate the organization's core values from the 'top-down'; characterized by Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) as a leader dependent communication of core values. I found that leaders exhibit this 'top-down' management of values through behaviours including 'pep talks,' leading by example, casual communication, goal setting and expectations, and institutionalized

organizational practices, whereby their intentional leveraging of core values was found to be infrequent or missing altogether.

Management scholars provide guidance for organizational leaders to inspire growth towards higher levels of MBV. For example, Mackey and Sisodia (2013) encourage organizational leaders to create dialogue towards questions that may inspire an alignment of core values amongst employees, such as “why does our business exist? Why does it need to exist? What core values animate the enterprise and unite all of our stakeholders?” (p. 34). In clarifying core values, Dolan and Garcia (2002) emphasize that leaders must build and incorporate meaning “in the most participative way possible” (p. 114), and Barrett (2014) further recommends that leaders use ‘cultural transformation tools,’ (e.g., values assessment surveys of employees, values alignment workshops) to co-create an organizational culture built on commonly shared core values.

Further, Bell-Laroche et al. (2014) suggest that leaders may “embed [core values] in the strategic planning framework of the [organization]” (p. 75), and Dolan et al. (2006) state that leaders can leverage core values by instilling them into organizational systems. For example, Barrett (2014) provides an inventory of policies, procedures and programs that allow leaders to strategically utilize core values, including: decision-making processes, benefits practices, employee selection and orientation, performance evaluation, promotion criteria, leadership development programs, management training programs and values awareness programs. Further, Pfeffer (1998) recognizes that through organizational structuring (e.g., employee levels and hierarchy) and physical office configurations and amenities, leaders may reinforce core values and sustain an organization’s culture (e.g., collaborative work spaces to reinforce a value of teamwork).

Thus, scholars indicate that aligning organizational values and embedding core values into institutional practices and systems can help leaders unite stakeholders through core values and allow those core values to animate through all organizational activities.

Opportunities for Sport Leaders

In summary, scholars' empirical work may support these organizational leaders in developing their MBV practices such that they can inspire greater organizational performance and unite stakeholders in their pursuit of an organizational higher purpose. The organization's place within a sport context seemingly encouraged a unique cultural environment, as Participants experienced sport's 'inherent values', but not all were found to be personally aligned with those values (i.e., an Indefinite level of MBV). Management scholars suggest that such a misalignment of values can cause employees' decline in engagement and cultural entropy that negatively impacts organizational performance. However, scholars also recommend several opportunities for organizational leaders to create a unified cultural environment, through a collective reflection on the organization's core values and an intentional embedding of those core values into organizational policy, practices and procedures. From this understanding, it is now possible to generate recommendations for practice and research that may further enhance this organization's leaders' capacity to understand the higher purpose of their sport organization and to unite their stakeholders in the pursuit of that higher purpose through strategic management of core values.

Recommendations for Practice

The insights gained from the discussion above provide me with an opportunity to generate recommendations for leaders of the case organization, such that they may

improve organizational practices through an awareness and strategic utilization of higher purpose and core values. Based upon Participants' perceived ambiguity observed towards the case organization's higher purpose and core values, I recommend that organizational leaders initiate a strategic reflection in which stakeholders may collectively clarify the organization's higher purpose and core values. If stakeholders collaboratively defined the organization's higher purpose and core values, then leaders may have an opportunity to institutionalize higher purpose and core values into organizational policy, practice and procedure such that all stakeholders can continually be aligned and united. Finally, I recommend that leaders continue to strategically manage organizational culture, through which they may maintain stakeholders' engagement with the organization's higher purpose and core values, and consistently foster organizational performance benefits for all employees that result from their management of higher purpose and core values.

Strategic Reflection

For organizational leaders to transform their organization, such that they understand their organization's 'why' and create beneficial value for society, I recommend they strategically reflect on their organization's higher purpose. While this research study represented an initial strategic reflection for this organization, further reflection by organizational leaders, employees and all other stakeholders in this organization may bring awareness to the organization's higher purpose and core values, such that leaders can strategically manage higher purpose to improve organizational performance and generate increasing value for stakeholders. Mackey and Sisodia (2013) explain that leaders may use a process called a *purpose search* to clarify an organization's higher purpose. A purpose search is an in-person forum that brings

together representatives from all stakeholder groups; and in this case, may include leaders, employees, customers, investors, partners, suppliers, and community members, to co-create a vision of what the higher purpose of the organization could or should be.

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) explain:

the exchange of information, values, and unique perspectives about the business can result in the rediscovery or creation of the company's higher purpose in a fairly short time – usually within a few days, and sometimes even in a single day if it is a really engaged process and is facilitated by a skilled consultant (p. 65-66).

Initiating such a collective discovery process allows organizational leaders to integrate stakeholders' perspectives and to develop a holistic understanding of the value that their organization provides to stakeholders. Further, this process would align with Dolan and Garcia's (2002) recommendation for stakeholders' 'strategic reflection,' about which they state, "meaning must be built in the most participative way possible" (p. 114).

Organizational leaders' utilization of a purpose may provide them the opportunity to relieve the ambiguity towards the organization's higher purpose and may provide them further opportunities to strategically utilize the higher purpose through their management of core values.

Beyond leaders' reflection on organizational higher purpose, I recommend that organizational leaders strategically reflect upon an organization's core values, such that they may have an opportunity to manage higher purpose through unifying and engaging core values. As previously mentioned, Barrett (2014) recommends using 'cultural transformation tools' that assist in identifying and aligning an organization's core values.

Barrett (2014) claims that such tools “make the invisible visible and the intangible tangible” (p. 82) when leaders may map the values of organizational stakeholders.

These tools typically take form as surveys in which organizational stakeholders select words or phrases that represent their personal values, values that represent the organization’s current culture, and values that represent a desired organizational culture. Barrett (2014) further explains that the transformational strength of these tools is within leaders’ ability to surface data that engender new conversations about values and beliefs that are prominent in the organizational culture. From these data collected with such tools, people start to talk about what is fundamentally important to them. These tools would facilitate leaders’ strategic reflection on an organization’s core values, and would align with Dolan and Garcia’s (2002) recommendation to do so in a “participative way” (p. 114). Leaders’ strategic reflection would enable them to unify organizational stakeholders and engage them with an inspiring sense of higher purpose, which scholars suggest would result in improved organizational performance and greater value created for all stakeholders (Barrett, 2014; Mackey & Sisodia, 2013; Sisodia et al., 2014).

Institutionalization of Higher Purpose and Core Values

To strategically utilize higher purpose, I recommend that organizational leaders of the case organization embed their organization’s higher purpose and core values system-wide, such that they are evident in organizational policy, practices and procedures. Once the organization’s higher purpose and core values are commonly shared, institutionalizing higher purpose in this way may represent an upward evolution along Bell-Laroche et al.’s (2014) 4-I Values Framework, such that higher purpose and core values are managed toward an Institutional or even an Inspirational level.

Institutionalizing higher purpose in this way may ensure that leaders continually communicate higher purpose and core values so that they guide employees and so that they underpin all organizational behaviour.

Organizational leaders have an opportunity to embed higher purpose and core values in organizational systems in multiple ways. First, organizational leaders could explicitly communicate the case organization's higher purpose and core values. Specifically, organizational leaders could embed higher purpose and core values within Schein's (1992) explicit level of organizational culture, through which organizational stakeholders may observe higher purpose through organizational artifacts such as policy, company branding, or public documents. Kerwin et al. (2011) suggest that organizational leaders can also embed higher purpose and core values at several levels of organizational management, including: first, a *strategic level*, where purpose and values are embedded within strategic plans; second, a *program level*, through which leaders use purpose and values to inform project development; third, a *procedural level*, where leaders factor purpose and values into organizational processes (e.g., decision-making frameworks); and fourth, a *performance level*, where leaders evaluate both individual and organizational performance based upon higher purpose and core values. Finally, organizational leaders can utilize several human resource practices to align with or reinforce higher purpose and core values, including: employee selection, employee training, promotion criteria, benefit practices, leadership development programs, values awareness programs, organizational structuring, and physical layouts and amenities (Barrett, 2014; Pfeffer, 1998).

Overall, leaders of the case organization may use higher purpose and core values to formalize many management practices and human resource practices. As observed in the case organization, organizational leaders have an opportunity to align many of the practices described above with the organization's higher purpose and core values, including employee training (i.e., through which leaders communicate the organization's higher purpose and core values, such as values awareness programs), benefit practices (i.e., through which leaders reward employees' contribution to the organization's higher purpose, such as rewards for achieving organizational goals), and physical layouts and amenities (i.e., through which leaders support employees' behaviour aligned with core values, such as collaborative spaces to support teamwork). Strategically aligning the organization's higher purpose and core values with organizational systems may represent leaders' opportunity to improve organizational performance and increase the beneficial value created for organizational stakeholders.

Leaders' Continued Attention to Organizational Culture

As a final recommendation, I recommend organizational leaders of this case organization continually manage organizational culture to ensure that any improvements from a strategic utilization of higher purpose and core values are both of a high quality and may be sustained. As Mackey and Sisodia (2013) claim, organizational culture is "a source of great strength and stability for [an organization], ensuring that its purpose and core values endure" (p. 35). In this study, organizational leaders were identified with an opportunity to dedicate greater awareness to their organization's culture, as few formal practices that fostered nor sustained the organization's culture were found in the case organization. Thus, organizational leaders have an opportunity to ensure that employees

are continually aligned and engaged with the organization's higher purpose by maintaining the organization's culture.

Barrett (2014) suggests that leaders must consistently attend to and monitor the maintenance of an organizational culture. Said simply, "measurement matters: whatever you measure (focus your attention on a regular basis) tends to improve" (p. xxiv). As such, Barrett (2014) suggests using further 'cultural transformation tools' such as surveys to evaluate cultural alignment amongst stakeholders and recognize any existing cultural entropy. Further, Sisodia et al. (2014) explain that many high-performing organizations have created internal 'culture committees' or 'cultural ambassadors' comprised of organizational employees who volunteer to take responsibility for ensuring organizational culture is upheld and sustained. Barrett (2014) suggests that "cultural ambassadors are the guardians of the culture" (p. 176), and may assist organizational leaders or human resource leaders by creating programs and practices that can reinforce organizational culture, as well as undergo specialized training that enables them to intervene if organizational leaders do not uphold the organization's higher purpose or core values.

Such examples of cultural transformation tools and cultural ambassadors may provide organizational leaders with both quantitative and qualitative methodology to monitor organizational culture and ensure higher purpose and core values are continually aligned within the organization. In that way of maintaining a conscious organizational culture, organizational leaders may ensure that the beneficial influence of their reflection and institutionalization of the organization's higher purpose and core values may be sustained. Thus, leaders of the case organization may have an opportunity to improve their organization's performance and increase their organization's creation of value for

stakeholders by defining their organization's higher purpose, embedding higher purpose within organizational practices, and monitoring the influence of higher purpose on organizational stakeholders.

Conclusion

Through a discussion of the findings, I identified key insights that emerged through this case study and their implications for practice in the case organization. In the current study, Participants perceived that the higher purpose of the case organization was ambiguous and organizational leaders' were found to manage higher purpose informally and intuitively, according to Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) framework. Connecting these findings to relevant literature revealed the opportunities available to these leaders to improve their organization's performance by clarifying their organization's higher purpose and embedding such a purpose and core values in to institutional practices and procedures. Thus, this discussion represents the translation of the research's findings in to insight and recommendations that may beneficially influence leaders of this organization and future scholars alike.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This research project emerged from my personal reflections upon sport's impact on my life and my aspiration to support leaders of sport organizations in impacting others in a similar way. As a spectating sport fan, professional sport provides me with joy and meaning. Embracing the role as a sport management Graduate researcher and a sport industry worker forced me to consider contemplative questions, such as 'why do sport organizations exist' and 'what are sport organizations doing to positively contribute to my life, and the lives of others who engage with sport?' The apparent absence of answers to those questions from sport researchers and practitioners alike indicated to me that a significant gap in our understanding of sport organizations exists; as Zeigler (2007) emphasizes, sport scholars and organizational leaders have no such answers to defend their existence.

Management scholars provided me with inspiration when I aimed to investigate this gap of understanding, as a group of organizational leaders and management researchers have been changing the dialogue of organizational management to include 'why?' and 'so what?' questions at the forefront of how leaders manage organizations. Mackey and Sisodia's (2013) call for organizational leaders to ask, 'why does our organization exist?' represents a shift from a common paradigm of organizational management where leaders focus on success and profit, to a paradigm where organizational leaders become vividly aware of their organization's impact and contributions to individuals and communities. Researchers (Barrett, 2014; Collins & Porras, 1994; Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Sisodia et al., 2014) fuel this dialogue by

indicating that leaders' self-awareness of their organization's higher purpose ignites organizational performance and empowers leaders to generate greater organizational success than otherwise possible. Thus, the purpose of this study was to reconcile the apparent absence of a dialogue towards sport's higher purpose and leaders' available opportunities to strategically utilize an organizational higher purpose by exploring the presence and management of higher purpose in a professional sport organization.

To fulfill this purpose, I explored how employees of a sport organization define their organization's higher purpose and how organizational leaders strategically manage the existence of an organizational higher purpose. By analyzing data from three sources including interviews with organizational employees, organizational artifacts and organizational documents, I described the higher purpose organizational employees and leaders espouse and the leadership practices leaders used to strategically manage higher purpose. Given the research design was that of a qualitative case study, the research did not garner definite conclusions about the case organization or the nature of the sport industry; instead, the research outcomes are 'lessons learned' from one organization that may prepare scholars and practitioners for future research and practice, and serve as inspiration for new questions and opportunities for growth that can further progress self-awareness and best-practice in the sport industry.

The findings of the research illuminated the degree of existence and the nature of higher purpose in the case organization and the practices utilized by organizational leaders to manage higher purpose. First, it was found that Participants perceived the organization's higher purpose to be largely ambiguous. Most recognized The Good (i.e., service to others) as a source of higher purpose, while further suggesting that The

Beautiful (i.e., perfection, excellence) and The Heroic (i.e., making the world a better place) integrated into the organization's pursuit of The Good. However, it was found that organizational employees and leaders have an opportunity to further discover the organization's higher purpose, as their perceptions of the organization's higher purpose varied and organizational leaders had yet to explicitly define a higher purpose. To that end, Participants perceived that organizational leaders in the case organization informally and intuitively manage higher purpose through a 'top-down' communication of organizational core values. Although, it is noteworthy that Participants believed that leaders—when communicating these core values—do not unify employees and suggested that leaders have opportunity to develop formal Management by Values practices that can align the values of employees and unify stakeholders in their pursuit of a higher purpose. In summary, the findings reveal that opportunities exist for this organization's leaders to clarify the organization's higher purpose and to embed that higher purpose into organizational systems, such that the organization's higher purpose can unify and inspire stakeholders.

Delimitations

In designing this research study, I made specific choices that created boundaries for the case study and defined the case sites and populations that I would not be studying. First, I delimited the case site to ensure that the case organization could be considered representative of similar organizations in the same industry. The organization chosen for this single-site case study did not have a published higher purpose or listed core values, which was intended to represent a typical organization in the professional sport industry;

I found that most professional sport organizations do not publically publish a higher purpose or core values when I was researching potential case sites.

I also delimited the sample population, based upon relevant theory of higher purpose and management of core values. Specifically, the population I chose to sample for interviews (i.e., employees) represented only one stakeholder group that Mackey and Sisodia (2013) recognize as having “a stake – or a personal interest – in the performance or actions of an organization” (p. 48). While integrating all stakeholder groups through a shared higher purpose and core values is a key tenet of Conscious Capitalism (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013), Dolan & Garcia (2002) emphasize the importance of organizational leaders in leading organizational culture change related to higher purpose and core values. Since an organization’s employees are the stakeholders who define the organization’s direction, manage the organization’s core values and, ultimately, create the products or services that provide other stakeholders value (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013), they were chosen as an appropriate population with which to conduct a strategic reflection on the organization’s higher purpose and management of core values. These delimitations bounded the research to a manageable unit of study, while still providing an opportunity to authentically research the phenomena of interest.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this study that may have influenced its outcomes, pertaining to first, the interview sample and second, pertaining to my researcher reflexivity. First, the interview sample was limited due to the limited participation of organizational leaders. Only two organizational leaders participated in interviews, which was less than the sampling goal of three to four. As such, leaders’ management behavior,

as depicted in the case description, was largely derived from the perceptions of middle- to low-level employees and observations of organizational artifacts and documents. Thus, leaders' limited participation created a potential non-response bias for this research, as exploring leaders' management practices directly with organizational leaders themselves likely would have provided further insight.

During participant recruiting, there was no definitive explanation presented for leaders' lack of participation. However, leaders' general lack of dialogue towards purpose, values and culture that was observed in the case organization may be related to their limited engagement with this research; for example, Participants acknowledged that leaders have not engaged in intentional culture management practices and these practices may not be within leaders' perceived scope of management responsibilities.

A second limitation existed pertaining to my challenge of managing my personal position as a former employee of the case organization. Tracy (2013) acknowledges that when a researcher is enmeshed in a culture, it may be difficult for that individual to notice the culture's unique qualities. Due to my transition from organizational employee to organizational researcher, I was susceptible to accepting my own taken-for-granted assumptions that may have limited the description of the case organization. I supported this potential limitation by implementing strategies (i.e., developing a thorough research protocol, engaging in continuous personal reflection, and specific analysis procedures) to bracket my past experiences. Such strategies allowed me to focus on authentically describing the case organization. It is possible that my employee stakeholder experiences influenced my interpretation of these data, which in turn, may have limited the findings of this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and discussion of this case study revealed potential directions for future research, as further exploration towards the higher purpose of sport organizations and how organizational leaders manage higher purpose may benefit future practitioners and scholars. Exploring these concepts may allow scholars to further appreciate the presence of higher purpose within sport organizations and increase the opportunity for sport organizational stakeholders to realize the beneficial influence of higher purpose on their organization.

First, I recommend that future researchers continue to develop a tenable theory for sport organizations, to clarify the ambiguity towards the higher purpose of sport organizations. Participants' ambiguity towards the case organization's higher purpose supports Zeigler's (2007) recommendation for research that identifies the need for scholars to develop a tenable theory for sport organizations. While the findings suggest that many people understand The Good (i.e., service to others) as the higher purpose of sport organizations, a noticeable variation in individual perspectives existed towards the question, 'why does a sport organization exist?' Thus, while Zeigler (2007) claimed a decade ago, "what are we really promoting, and do we know why we are doing it? I do not have a comprehensive answer" (p. 298), a great opportunity remains to develop an understanding of the higher purpose of sport organizations.

Future research could assist in developing a tenable theory for sport by studying a sport organization's higher purpose from a variety of perspectives and within a variety of contexts. For example, researchers could explore higher purpose within multiple sport organizations (i.e., a multiple-site case study) to gain depth of understanding within one

sport sector (i.e., public, non-profit or commercial sectors) or explored within different types of sport organizations (e.g., professional/commercial sport, amateur sport, collegiate sport organizations), or within national or provincial sport organizational contexts, to gain a breadth of understanding across the sport industry.

Since I sampled organizational employees to serve as a lens in to the organization's higher purpose, understanding other stakeholders' perspectives (e.g., consumers, fans, corporate partners, community members, athletes) may expand the understanding of a sport organization's higher purpose. In so doing, I recommend that future research explores perceptions of all external stakeholder groups together (i.e., consumers, fans, corporate partners, community members) to construct a comprehensive understanding of how a sport organization's higher purpose is perceived externally. Finally, given a sport organization's value to society may vary across international contexts, studying global perceptions of a sport organization's higher purpose outside of North America may help develop a globally holistic tenable theory for sport organizations. Thus, future research could help scholars and practitioners discover a tenable theory for sport organizations and realize a definition of 'why sport organizations exist.'

Second, to strategically utilize that awareness of a higher purpose, I recommend continued development of Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework. The findings of this research indicate leaders of the case organization exhibited an undefined MBV level within Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework. Specifically, leaders of the case organization were found to exhibit an 'Indefinite' level of MBV that resides between the Inactive Level and Intuitive Levels, where core values are

experienced and communicated, but are not commonly shared by organizational stakeholders.

Thus, scholars appear to have an opportunity to further explore the 4-I Values Framework to test the proposed inclusion of the 'Indefinite' level and to further understand Participants' experience of core values at this level (i.e., when core values are experienced but are not commonly shared amongst all organizational stakeholders). Simply, there may be opportunity for researchers to deepen the depictions of MBV within this framework and further understand how organizational leaders can manage core values. To further develop the 4-I Values Framework, I recommend that researchers continue to observe organizational leaders to understand the various ways in which they may practice MBV. For example, researchers could design qualitative case studies to explore leaders' alignment and unity of core values within organizations, while considering if and how such leaders have influenced their organization's culture through MBV practices.

Applying the 4-I Values Framework in the study of leaders' management of core values may provide further insight towards the ways in which leaders manage core values and in so doing, enable scholars to continually develop the 4-I Values Framework such that it remains a relevant resource to accurately analyze an organizational leader's MBV behaviours. Furthermore, scholars and practitioners will be further enabled to assist organizational leaders through developing analysis tools such as the 4-I Values Framework. Specifically, future research refining models such as the 4-I Framework may support leaders in developing practices that leverage higher purpose and core values to

improve organizational performance and increase the value provided to organizational stakeholders.

Third, since a conscious approach to management relies on organizational leaders' commitment, I recommend that future scholars explore sport leaders' level of meaning-making to understand their cognitive, behavioural, and emotional capacity to become aware of their organization's higher purpose, such that they can strategically manage higher purpose. While literature towards servant leadership, transformational leadership and ethical leadership provides a deep understanding of the qualities Mackey and Sisodia (2013) attribute to a conscious leader, future research that applies Cook-Greuter's (2004) evaluation of leaders' meaning-making levels may be indicative towards leaders' capacities to embody these conscious leadership qualities. By identifying leaders' capacity to become aware of "[their] inner self, [their] external reality, and the impacts [they] have on the world" (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013, p. 29), scholars may develop a further understanding of leaders' capacity to become aware of their organization's higher purpose and the core values that unify their stakeholders.

Further, given Barrett (2014) emphasis that "organizations don't transform, people do" (p. xxiii), creating an organizational culture where organizational stakeholders are more conscious of the organization's higher purpose will begin with leaders expanding their own level of meaning-making. Understanding organizational leaders' worldviews (e.g., self-centric, global-centric) would allow scholars, leaders and other transformational change agents to 'meet people where they are' and foster the possible evolution of an organization's collective meaning-making level towards a more global-

centric worldview, whereby individuals have a greater capacity to understand their organization's higher purpose.

To this end, researchers could explore the worldviews of sport organizational leaders to help identify their level of meaning-making, utilizing Constructivist Ego Development Theory (Loevinger, Wessler, & Redmore, 1970) and empirically valid tools such as the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT) (Cook-Greuter, 2004) as a measure of an individual leaders' meaning-making level (i.e., also known as level of ego-development, worldview). Barrett (2014) also encourages researchers to use the lesser empirically known Cultural Transformation Tools to map organizational stakeholders' espoused core values to understand individual needs and levels of meaning-making.

Researchers could utilize these measures to understand sport leaders' levels of meaning-making within a single sport organization, within multiple sport organizations in one sport sector, or within multiple organizations within multiple sectors. Understanding leaders' meaning-making levels in this way may help inform scholars' and leaders' future developmental initiatives that can support organizational transformation whereby higher purpose becomes increasingly present within the organization and the organization becomes more 'conscious.'

Fourth, I recommend that researchers explore the implementation of strategic human resource practices for sport organizations. With organizational leaders in the current case site having yet to formalize many human resource practices (e.g., employee training, benefits, performance evaluations), there may be opportunity for leaders of the case organization to develop strategic human resource practice that can unify employees

in their pursuit of the organization's higher purpose. With scholars emphasizing the importance of 'people management' practices to align employees and manage organizational culture (Barrett, 2014; Pfeffer, 1998), understanding how human resources are currently managed in sport organizations may support scholars and practitioners in developing future human resource practices that allow leaders to strategically utilize higher purpose.

Future research could explore current human resource practices in the sport industry to further understand how organizational leaders manage employees and if there are opportunities for improvements with these practices. I recommend that scholars conduct further exploratory research towards human resource practices within sport organizations, to understand if the absence of formal human resource practices observed in this case study is unique or is representative of a general trend in the sport industry. If leaders do have an opportunity to develop human resource practices in sport organizations, researchers could investigate the barriers that have prevented implementation of human resource practices in these organizations, explore how current practices influence organizational performance, and examine how human resource practices could be developed and improved. Through such study, scholars could identify potential areas of opportunity for sport leaders to use human resource practices as part of their strategic management of an organizational higher purpose, which could lead to increased employee engagement, productivity and overall, heightened organizational performance.

Finally, with the case organization's historical context being observed to influence the organization's current cultural environment, I recommend researchers

investigate the historical development of leadership and management in the sport industry. Many participants espoused the organization's historical existence as an organizational purpose, with some suggesting that the organization has evolved from being a purely sport entity to being a more formal business. Participant 5 speculated that "the beginning of the team . . . was probably just based on sport in the community. And then, has become more about the business It's been, maybe, a 100% down to 50-50, in terms of being about sport and now being about [business]."

There were evidences in the case site which suggested that the organizational evolution from sport entity to business has influenced the organization's current leadership context. First, the organization's business leaders have historically been 'sport-minded' leaders, with one individual serving as both the sport team's General Manager and the leader of the organization's business operations as recently as 2000, and with the organization's current CEO being a former professional athlete. As well, Participants' used sport metaphors to espouse organizational higher purposes related to The Beautiful (i.e., the desire to win championships, 'being the best'), potentially connecting the current higher purpose espoused by stakeholders to a historical purpose of the sport entity. Finally, many of Participants' espoused core values are commonly associated with sport (e.g., excellence, teamwork, competition) and Participants acknowledged that organizational leaders' management strategies were often similar to coaching practices from sport (e.g., 'pep talks,' expectations, goal setting).

To understand how sport leaders may develop managerial practices in the future, it may be important for researchers to explore the historical context for leaders of sport organizations. Researchers could utilize an analysis of historical organizational

documents in which the history of the sport organization's leadership is discussed, or conduct interviews with organizational leaders who were involved in the evolution and development of such organizations. Exploring the historical evolution of sport organizations and their emergence as commercialized businesses may provide insight towards why sport organizations operate in the manner they do and why organizational leaders utilize the type of management approaches they do. As well, understanding the historical context of sport organizations as businesses could provide further insight towards the higher purposes and core values that have underpinned sport organizations through their emergence and development.

Moving Forward

Overall, this research provides a deep description of how higher purpose may exist within a sport organization, and in so doing, supports the development of valuable leadership practices in this organization and contributes to the evolution of sport management practices in the 21st century. The discussion generated from studying this case organization joins sport management scholars' greater dialogue that recognizes the opportunity for organizations of the globally prevalent and highly commercialized sport industry to engage in a self-discovery dialogue, as well as the dialogue amongst mainstream management scholars that appreciates the prosperous opportunities of leading an organization with a meaningful and inspirational higher purpose.

Discussing the value employees believe this case organization provides to its stakeholders helps organizational leaders gain a greater self-awareness about *why* this organization exists. Connecting this understanding with contemporary management frameworks has revealed the opportunities available to leaders to strategically manage

their organization's culture to both improve the performance of their organization and increase the meaningful value that they can create for their stakeholders. The results of this research direct organizational leaders to overcome the organization's current disparities in beliefs and values by definitively communicating an organizational higher purpose and embedding core values into organizational systems, such that everyone who interacts with the organization may become unified in their beliefs and inspired in their behaviour.

In the process of exploring this organization's higher purpose and its leaders' management of higher purpose, this case study also contributes to the creation of future knowledge within sport management. First, this case study provides an example of how research may help generate a tenable theory for sport management; that is, from scholars deeply examining *why* people believe sport organizations exist and the value these organizations may create for their stakeholders. Secondly, this research provokes new questions that may help sport scholars and practitioners recognize the unique characteristics of sport organizations, develop the tools to maximize sport organizations' performance potential, and understand the nature of sport organizations' histories such that they are prepared to create meaningful futures.

As the sport industry continues to evolve and gain prominence in popular culture, I believe that the need for these self-aware practices will increase. Increased popularity towards the sport industry could foreseeably lead to increased attention towards the behaviour of sport organizational leaders and a brighter spotlight under the public's critical eye. A clear understanding of 'why our organization exists' and 'the value an organization are creating for our stakeholders' may equip sport organizational leaders

with the self-awareness to respond to criticism, where an explicit and clear higher purpose could serve as a means for organizational leaders to demonstrate that sport organizations are ethical and meaningful enterprises. While external pressures may organically emphasize the need for organizational leaders to reflect on their higher purpose, initiating this contemplative dialogue pre-emptively through research such as this will only enhance the ability of organizational leaders to discover and communicate their higher purpose.

In generating a dialogue towards the higher purpose of sport organizations, I believe it will be important for researchers and practitioners to navigate the topic carefully. With questions such as ‘why does the organization exist’ having yet to be asked about many organizations, organizational leaders may be sensitive to assumptions that there is a gap in their understanding of their organization. Thus, it will be important for a dialogue of discovery towards an organization’s higher purpose to be appreciative and constructive; I believe creating a collaborative discussion will be the healthiest and most productive approach to reflecting on any organization’s higher purpose.

In conclusion, by continually studying the nature and application of higher purpose in sport organizations, we, as sport practitioners and researchers, may be able to capture and liberate the ‘power of sport.’ In that way, higher purpose could be the tool to utilizing the ‘power of sport’ in our management of sport organizations, providing sport leaders an opportunity to inspire all the people touched by sport and ignite a movement of sport management that uses sport to, as Nelson Mandela said, ‘change the world.’

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Appendix A: Letter of Consent – Organizational Gatekeeper

Date:

Project Title: Exploring Higher Purpose in a Professional Sport Organization

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Kirsty Spence, Associate Professor
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INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to learn about organizational culture in a professional sport organization, and how organizational leaders can manage culture to improve the organization's performance.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to provide permission for the researcher to conduct a single-site case study of your organization, where the researcher will interview organizational employees, observe artifacts in organizational workspaces and analyze organizational documents. This case study will be conducted during the period of one month (February, 2016).

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation in this case study include a greater understanding of your organization's culture and how culture can be managed to further enhance organizational performance. As well, this research will contribute to the greater understanding of management in the sport industry, so academics and practitioners can continue to improve the effectiveness of sport organizations.

There may be risks associated with participation, as knowledge of organizational management strategies may be shared during the publication of this study. Additionally, participants may have a risk of obligation, due to the existence of a personal relationship with the researcher.

To manage these risks, the organization's leaders will maintain the right to keep the organization's name confidential (through the use of a pseudonym) during the publication of this study. To manage a risk of obligation specifically, it is strongly noted that participation in this research is not mandatory and any participant maintains the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Participants' withdrawal will not result in any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If desired, a pseudonym will be used to keep the organization's identity confidential. Upon the completion of the research, leaders of the organization will be provided the opportunity to review the research and decide whether the use of a pseudonym is preferred. For individual participants,

the case-study will be exploring organizational behaviour and management in general, and will not name individual employees. The only individual identifier reported will be the position level of an interview participant (e.g., intern, coordinator, manager, director, vice president). However, if the organization chooses to be named in the research's publication, an individual's confidentiality would be limited, due to the limited number of individuals at each position level.

Data recorded digitally during this study will be stored on a password-protected USB storage device, which when not in use, will be stored in a locked storage box. The password to the USB storage device will be known only by the PI and PSI. After 24 months, these digital files will be deleted. Furthermore, data recorded on paper, through handwritten fieldnotes, will be stored in a locked storage box, with the password known by both the PI and PSI. After 24 months, these handwritten field notes will also be destroyed in a paper shredder.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Additionally, an employees' participation in this research study is voluntary. As such, any employee's choice to participate, not participate or to withdraw from the research study will not impact his/her status in the organization.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available through Evan Gwartz (eg10eo@brocku.ca) six months after the conclusion of the case study.

Additionally, following the completion of the research project, the PSI will create a research report that summarizes the research's purpose, methods, analyses, and findings. The PSI will provide this (approximately 1-page) research report to organizational members. This document will serve as an accessible overview of what research was completed, its central purpose, and what the PSI found during the study. The PSI will disseminate the report to both research participants and all organizational employee by electronic mail.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Kirsty Spence using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [file #16-061]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Invitation Email for Organizational Employees

Subject: Research Participation: [Name of Organization] Organizational Culture

Good morning friends and former co-workers,

As many of you know, simultaneous to my time working with you all this past season, I have been completing a Masters of Sport Management at Brock University. As part of my degree program, I have the opportunity to conduct a research project that will ideally benefit the sport organization I study and contribute to our general knowledge of the sports industry.

I have been working with [organizational leader] to create a project where I will research the [organization, and hopefully help us further understand the culture of this workplace. The goal of the research is to reflect on the [organization's] organizational culture and to understand how culture at the [organization] is managed. Doing so is theorized to bring awareness to the common values of the organization, which can help enhance employee experiences and ultimately, improve organizational performance.

As part of my research, I hope to host many of you for interviews, so I can hear your perspective on the [organization's] culture and understand your experiences as an employee. If you wish to be involved in an interview (30-40 minutes), please let me know by replying to this email.

It is important to note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and I understand that you may prefer not to be involved in this study. If you do not wish to be involved, you have no obligation to provide any further action.

Thank you for taking the time to read this note. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to let me know!

All the best,

Evan Gwartz

Appendix C: Letter of Consent – Individual Participation in an Interview

Date:

Project Title: Playing with a Purpose: Exploring Higher Purpose in a Professional Sport Organization

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Kirsty Spence, Associate Professor
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
(905) 688-5550 Ext. x5027
kspence@brocku.ca

Principal Student Investigator (PSI): Evan Gwartz, MA Candidate
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
905-327-5961
egwartz@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to learn about organizational culture in a professional sport organization, and how an organization can manage organizational culture to improve performance.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant of an interview, you will be asked to participate in an interview (30-40 minute), during which time you will discuss your experiences as an employee of the organization. Interviews will be audio recorded. The Primary Student Investigator leading this research project will conduct the interview.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation in this case study include a greater understanding of your organization's culture and how culture can be managed to further enhance employee experiences and organizational performance. As well, this research will contribute to the greater understanding of management in the sport industry, so academics and practitioners can continue to improve the effectiveness of sport organizations.

There may be risks associated with participation, as participants may have a risk of obligation, due to the existence of a personal relationship with the interviewer. To manage this risk, any interviewed employee will maintain the right to be voluntarily excluded from the research. To manage a risk of obligation specifically, it is strongly noted that participation in this research is not mandatory and any participant maintains the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Participants' withdrawal will not result in any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This case-study will be exploring organizational behaviour and management in general, and will not name individual employees. The only individual identifier reported will be the participant's position level (e.g., intern, coordinator, manager, director, vice president). If the organization desires, a pseudonym will be used for the organization's identification. However, if the organization chooses to be named in the research's publication, an individual's confidentiality would be limited, due to the limited number of individuals at each position level.

Data recorded digitally during this study will be stored on a password-protected USB storage device, which when not in use, will be stored in a locked storage box. The password to the USB storage device will be known only by the PI and PSI. After 24 months, these digital files will be deleted. Furthermore, data recorded on paper, through handwritten field notes, will be stored in a locked storage box, with the password known by both the PI and PSI. After 24 months, these handwritten field notes will also be destroyed in a paper shredder.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Additionally, a participant's choice to participate, not participate or to withdraw from the research study will not impact his/her status in the organization.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available through Evan Gwartz (eg10eo@brocku.ca) six months after the conclusion of the case study.

Additionally, following the completion of the research project, the PSI will create a research report that summarizes the research's purpose, methods, analyses, and findings. Furthermore, the PSI will provide this (approximately 1-page) research report to organizational members. This document will serve as an accessible overview of what research was completed, its central purpose, and what the PSI found during the study. The PSI will disseminate the report to both research participants and all organizational employee by electronic mail.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Kirsty Spence using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [file #16-061]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Opening Interview Questions

OIQ1. How long have you been involved in this organization?

OIQ2. How did you come to be involved in this organization?

OIQ3. How would you explain what you do here on a day-to-day basis?

Generative Questions

GIQ1. Why do you believe this organization exists? [Probe to explore the value the organization provide to them; Follow-up question: what would happen if the organization didn't exist?]

GIQ2. How do you think others (including fellow employees, customers, corporate partners, etc.) would explain why the organization exists? [Probe to explore the value the organization provide to those stakeholders]

GIQ3. For those involved with the organization (e.g., employees, customers, partners, etc.), what do you believe some common values would be?

Respondent Interview

Potential questions for organizational employees, where individual perspectives and experiences are considered

RIQ1. How do you think those common values we spoke of appear in your work or within the organization? [Probe for examples of management behavior that engages common values]

Informant Interview

Potential questions for leaders of organization, where the entire organization is considered

IIQ1. Do you believe that organizational values are important in the daily management of your organization? [Probe for why; examples of values in action, how common, outcomes.]

IIQ2. To what extent do you think your organization is intentionally managing its organizational values to achieve its objectives? [Probe for reasons and examples; ways they could be more intentional; role of organizational values in shaping culture of organization and influence behavior.]

IQ3. I am curious about your current management philosophy and the extent to which you believe it is taking into account your organization's values. [Probe for to find out what this way? What could happen to a greater extent? examples of optimal functioning, and degree to which it is reflected in organization's values]

Closing Interview Questions

CIQ1. Is there anything else we haven't spoken about that you would think is important to share?

Appendix E: Pre-Entry Reflection

January 9th, 2017

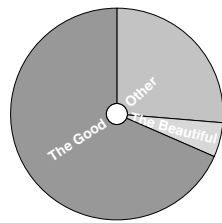
I believe that professional sport provides people a sense of community. That it provides people a feeling of belonging and connection to others. In that way, I believe the [organization's team] exist as a symbol of civic identity for the city. Members of the community use the team as a rallying-point and something they can share. On a game day, twenty-five thousand people assemble at the [sport] stadium to share their spirit with their fellow community members. From my experience with the organization, I believe that employees find meaning in their job due to that sense of community. There is a nobility or grandeur associated with working for the team, because it in some ways, is at the centre of the community's culture. Employees value being a part of that community, and contributing to that community. For that reason, I believe that the organization's higher purpose may be defined as 'the Good,' where the work they do serves the community, in the hopes of bringing people together and uniting the community.

I also believe that professional sport strongly values 'excellence' and the pursuit of perfection. Many people define a sport team's worth by the games and championships they can win. Within the organization, I believe many employees and leaders enact an 'athlete's mentality' to inspire a stronger work ethic and be more productive. Sport metaphors or quotes from famous professional coaches are often used to provide inspiration or motivation. As well, within the organization, there were many landmarks of 'wins'; not just on the field, but in terms of revenue generated or praise received. To step outside the business operations and towards the [sport] operations staff (i.e., the coaches, players, trainers), success is defined by the amount of games and championships won. A memorable quote that is left in my mind from a staff meeting; 'to be the best; that's the only reason we do what we do,' or something of that nature. The value for 'excellence' and the pursuit of 'success' may indicate that the organization's higher purpose is 'the Beautiful', with work aiming to achieve that which is excellent or perfect.

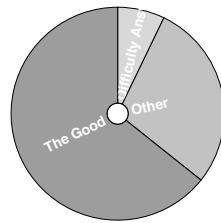
Considering the organization's strategic management of core values, I believe that the organization's practices would be located between the Inactive and Intuitive level of Bell-Laroche et al.'s (2014) 4-I Values Framework. I believe that there are core values that unite the stakeholders of the organization. As exemplified by the previous paragraphs of this reflection, I do believe to have witnessed sources of meaning within the organization, that are commonly shared by stakeholders. However, I never observed these core values being explicitly stated. I observed leadership behaviours that could indicate an intentional, strategic use of core values (for example, the 'be the best' quote above), but this was an informal statement presented to me only that one time. I believe that leaders of the organization will be able to acknowledge that there are common sources of meaning and value that unite stakeholders of the organization, but will recognize that these core values have not been strategically utilized or fully embedded into organizational practice. Similarly, I believe that employees not in leadership positions will acknowledge that shared values exist, but will acknowledge that these values have not been formally integrated in to their work or interactions with other organizational members.

Appendix F: Participant Espoused Higher Purpose

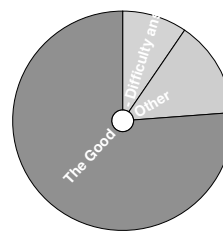
Participants' response to 'why does the organization exist?' as graphically represented, based on the number of coded references to each type of purpose.



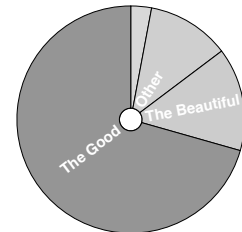
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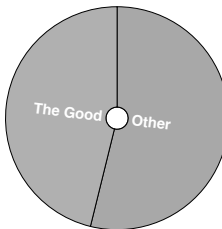
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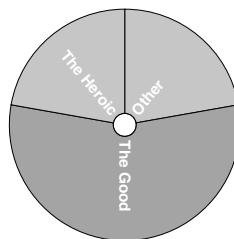
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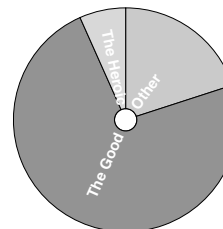
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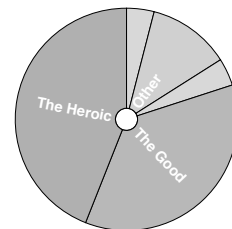
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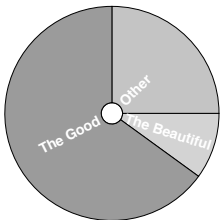
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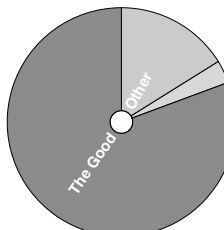
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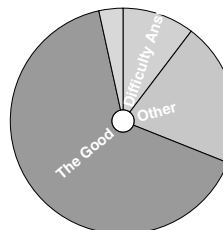
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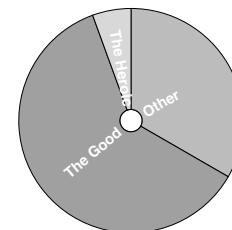
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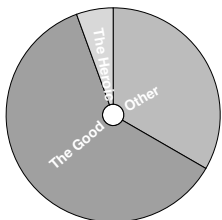
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P13

Appendix G: Espoused Core Values by Interview Participants

Organizational Value	<i>Participants who referenced (n = 13)</i>
Excellence	10
Teamwork, unity	8
Competition, 'Being the Best'	7
Passion for work	6
Generate revenue	5
Strong work ethic	5
Employee relationships, beyond just co-workers	4
Creating amazing fan experiences	4
Employee motivation beyond paycheck	3
Give up the 'good' to go for the 'great'	3
Support the community	3
Take care of staff (i.e., rewards, incentives)	3
Organizational interests over community interests	2
Innovation	2
'Next man up' mentality	1
Appreciate employees for their work	1
Commitment to organization	1
Humility and commitment to others' needs	1
Interdependence	1
Perseverance	1
Take pride in one's work	1
'Under promise, over deliver'	1
'Work hard, play hard'	1